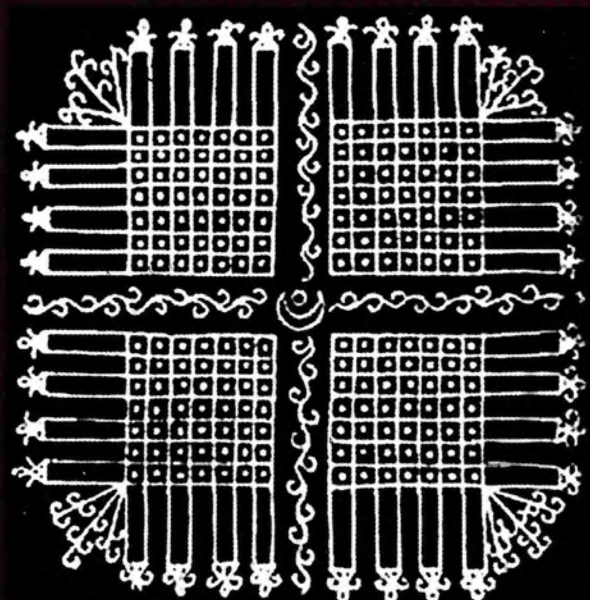


Visioning Folklore



Mahendra K Mishra

ABOUT THE BOOK

Visioning Folklore is a compilation of essays based on the field study conducted in the district of Kalahandi in Orissa. The author h as tried to visualize the Indian culture form the cultural aspects of this region. The major areas of discussion in this book are epics in oral and written form, epics in socio-cultural context, ethnic identity and oral narratives, folk discourse, drought in folk psychology of Kalahandi, sacred centers and tribal non tribal interaction, tribal festivals in performance context. This book explores the first hand information on cultural expressions of Kalahandi adjoining Western Orissa.

VISIONING FOLKLORE

ESSAYS ON FOLKLORISTICS OF WESTERN ORISSA

Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra

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VISIONING FOLKLORE

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FORWARD

I have known Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra, a dedicated folklorist for over a period of 15 years. He has worked extensively and intensively in various branches of folklore relating to Orissa and the adjoining areas. He has contributed excellent papers towards Seminars on the Folk and Tribal versions of the Ramayana and the Mahabharat from Orissa and Central India. He has enriched our understanding of the popular percepation of drought and famine in Kalahandi, which has become a metaphor of malnutrition. He has interpreted the folklore of the Gonds as an ingredient in their ethnic identity and oral narratives indicates his skill in tribal studies. The dialogue on oral discourse as the counterpoint to written discourse in folklore gives new vision of analysing the literary texts. Similarly his study on sacred centres and female infanticide among the Kondhs of Kalahandi is enriched with empirical data. Dr. Mishra's field observation, knowledge on local culture and insight in analysis of data from the cultural context is appreciated.

He has attended Seminars and Workshops. Honours and distinctions have come in his way. Yet he has many years of creative work ahead, in which the resources to be assisted in every possible way, by all those who are interested in folklore.

K.S. Singh
15.09.2000

THIS BOOK

The articles included in this compilation consists of various aspects of culture involving oral history, myths, legends, oral epics, folk narratives, folk songs, fairs and festivals and sacred centres. The primary data used in this compilation have been collected from a culture area—the western most part of Orissa. My nativity has helped me in discovering the cultural aspects of my study areas. The field research infact broadened my vision to witness the coexistence of multifaceted aspects of culture which, instead of divisive force, have given a scope to understand how "unity in diversities" is expressed in the creative arts of this region.

The age old men and women of the villages with the youngsters have shaped their culture through their life experience. They have much to say to the folklorists who only study them, but do not become one among them. In indigenous knowledge thought is not separated from action. But our knowledge and wisdom centres have wishfully become successful in separating knowledge and thought from praxis.

For this reason, our folk songs are not as a part of action. Our own people enriched with lots of tales and songs are deviod of using their mothertongue and from the early childhood the children face the non-contextual content in schools.

The cultural symbols and creative expressions are a part of my experiential learning. The greatst advantage i have during my folklore research is that, I was part of the folklore and then I had the opportunity to study it and bring it to other people . I agree that each paper in this compilation represents one genre of folklore. But, simultaneously there is a invisible link among all these contents representing the

convergent culture of a land. Moreover, this is conscious effort to cover the important aspects of culture through the identified genres.

It has been difficult on my part to put my language of thought into language of text. May be this is due to the fact that I have little exposure to think properly or correctly in a language which I don't use for thought and knowingly using the same language to produce the text.

Some of these papers have been published in some National and International Journals. I am thankful to the editors who have been kind enough to publish these papers.

I am thankful to Prof. J. Handoo, Late Prof. Lauri Honko, Prof. Dan Ben Amos, Dr. Chittaranjan Das, Prof. John Miles Foley, Dr. Anniki Kaivola Bregenhoj, Prof. B.N. Datta, Dr. J.P. Das, and Mr. Dhir Jhingran for their academic support during my folklore studies.

I express my heartful gratitude to Dr. Prafulla Kumar Tripathy, a linguist and Reader in English, for his kind help in preparation of this book. I am also thankful to Sri Asutosh Das and Sri Bhakta Kumar Mishra and Sri Ramesh Thakur for their cooperation in preparing and computerizing the papers.

Last of all I am very much thankful to Sri Mahendra Misra, Proprietor of Lark Books without whose efforts this compilation would not have come out.

Mahendra Kumar Mishra

CONTENTS

Influence of the Ramayana Tradition on the Folklore of Central India

India constitutes a fascinating mosaic of diversities of various types, thereby earning an epithet of subcontinent. The huge landmass encompasses a vast and varied geographic expanse with a unique historical continuity, ethnic diversity, rich cultural processes as well as the mature civilizational framework. The Indian culture represents a massive bedrock of philosophical and epistemological foundations assimilating the best in the life and custom of the subcontinent. Here the vast majority of ethnic subcultures, cultural variations, religious multiplicity make the Indian society a conglomerate of co-existing diversities in a state of perpetual equilibrium with common central focus of cultural integration and universal appeal. Many castes and tribes maintain each other's cultural specificity and uniqueness through the complex grapevine of caste hierarchy/status either prescribed for the group or achieved through social processes excepting for a few characteristic cultural features, without which the basic identification of the group would be difficult. There is broad cultural consensus in the whole subcontinent. There has been significant assimilation between different groups such that co-existence and interactions at various levels have brought in a great deal of synthesis to give our society a multi-ethnic character and a plurality of approaches and world views.

The present study is based mainly on the available folklore material of Western Orissa. While studying it, the influence of the Ramayanic tradition upon the indigenous tradition has been noted, and the parochialization of the universal characters of the great epic tradition and its influence on many ethnic groups have also formed part of this micro-study.

The authors of the epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have given due importance to each and every part of India encompassing lands, rivers, mountains, forests, different ethnic cultures and customs. Again, the assimilation of the Ramayana tradition into regional cultures and subcultures has evolved from a spiritual phenomenon identifying the incarnations of God (avatara) with folk heroes. They are associated with various regional traditions of India. By identifying the respective regions and places with the avataras and their mythical and miraculous events, the local folk groups identify themselves as part of the larger Indian culture, thus contributing to national and cultural unity. Many local communities with their regional traditions have been deeply attracted towards the mainstream of the Indian cultural tradition through these epics. Thus the Ramayana forms 'the centre of the integration' of Indian civilization and has a great influence of the 'network of regional cultures'.

In this context, the aim of this study is to show how the Ramayana tradition has influenced the folk traditions of central Indian region in general and those of western Orissa and Chhattisgarh in particular, with respect to heritage, ethnic group, caste formation, oral traditions, folk religion and rituals and the performing folk arts.

Heritage of the Ramayana

There is hardly any regional tradition in India, which is not associated with the Ramayana. Historically, the Ramayana is held to have spread over to South East Asia before 400 B.C. In 4th century A. D. The theory of avataravada (incarnation of God in various forms) had already evolved (Shankalia, 1982 : 21). It is true that from that time Rama has been associated with an avatara of God.

The region of ancient south Kosala is presently identified with central India, especially the Raipur and Bilaspur areas of Madhya Pradesh and Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts of western Orissa. The capital of South Kosala was Kusavati, named after Kusha, the son of Rama. Kusavati has been identified with some archaeological sites of Western Orissa and Chhattisgarh (Singh Deo, 1986 : 28-32). Historians have discovered the location of Ravana's Lanka at Sonepur in western Orissa in the context of history realities (Shankalia, 1982 : 163). Thus the history and archaeology of South Kosala bear the heritage of the Ramayana. Moreover the oral traditions and the folk rituals have been based on the epic. These show the popularity of the Ramayana in central India.

Rama Katha in Legends and Myths

Some legends associated with the characters of the Ramayana have been found in this region. These include the following :

1. The Gadhamadana mountain (western Orissa), the Chitrakuta jungle (adjoining Bastar and Koraput) and Malyavantagiri (Malkangiri of Koraput district in Orissa) and Turturia (Chhattisgarh) and some legendary places in central India which bear the holy footprints of Rama Lakshmana and Sita.

2. Rama entered Dandakaranya with Lakshmana and Sita. There Sita took bath in the Savari river (now the Kolab river in Koraput). Rama worshipped a shivalinga on a mountain which is know as Ramagiri after him (Sahu, 1977 : 333).

3. In the Katpar-Purudadi mountain range of Kalahandi district, a holy place named Patala-Ganga is known for a legend, which says that to quench the thirst

of Sita, Lakshmana brought forth water from patala by piercing an arrow into the earth. It is a natural fountain. Here, the footmarks of Rama and Sita are worshipped in a stone.

4. Kusavati nagara, which was known as the capital of South Kosala, is identified with the archaeological sites of Ranipur Jharial located in the district of Bolangir (Mahapatra, 1971 : 67). The Somesvara temple, the Indralath brick temple and sixty-four Jogini temples are in the complex of Ranipur Jharial. Near this place a village named Kahasil is situated. Historians are of the opinion that the name of the village might have originated from Kusasthali or Kusavati. The temple architecture is the work of the Somavamsi kings of South Kosala.

5. Turturia is a place in the Chhatisgarh region. A legend locates Valmikis heritage, where Sita gave birth to her twins Lava and Kusha, in this area (Gupta, 1977 : 159).

Often the people have exalted their regional gods by associating them with Rama, the god incarnate. The god Rama is found even in the myth relating to the creation of the Gond tribe of Garhamandala. According to it, the first human being born from Mahadeo and Parvati was a Gond. During the Rama-Ravana war, a Gond couple was in a jungle in the vicinity of Ravanas Kingdom. In their previous birth, Mahadeo had cursed them, saying that they would remain childless unless they drank the charanodoka (water from the feet) of Rama on his arrival at Lanka. The Gond couple waited for Rama in the forest and when he arrived, they worshipped him by washing his feet with water, which they then drank. Rama blessed them and said, "You will be known as Ravanavasmsi Gonds. You will have three sons, Alko, Talko and Karcho."

Then Rama fought Ravana and Killed him. On returning from Lanka with Sita, Rama brought the Gond people with him. They were known as Suryavamsi Gonds, and they have kinship with the Ravanavamsi Gonds.

The Bonda tribe of Malkanagiri has the following myth which is related to the Rama-Katha. While Rama was wandering in the forest with Lakshmana and Sita, the Bonda women laughed at them for two reasons : One was that there were two males with one female and the other that the females clothes were too thin to cover her private parts. Sitas clothes were given by Brahma. She knew this, so she cursed the Bonda women : You Bonda women will never use cloth and even if you do, your body will never tolerate the heat of the cloth. Till today the Bonda woman are half-clad. Similarly, the myth collected from the Bonda villages by Verrier Elwin also explains why the Bonda women do not use cloth to cover their bodies. This myth is also associated with Rama, Lakshmana and Sita (Elwin 1950 : 63-4). A water source named Sitakund is found in Bonda hills.

In the above myths, the tribes have tried to project their ancestors as contemporaries of Rama. This shows the wide reach of Rama-katha among the indigenous people of the different regions of India.

The origin myths of the different castes and tribes of central India, especially of those who were known as the ruling dynasties, have accepted particular portions of the Ramayana myth as their own, for example "the story from the banishment of Sita to the acceptance of Kusha and Lava by Rama." The structure of this myth may be divided into the following mythemes.

1. Sita was banished by Rama because of a public scandal
2. Sita was pregnant when she was banished and

abandoned, isolated and helpless, in the jungle

3. The abandoned Sita was discovered by sage Valmiki. He reared Sita as his own daughter in his ashram

4. Lava and Kusha were born in Valmikis ashram and were reared and educated by him

5. After showing miraculous and superhuman powers, Lava and Kusha were adopted by Rama

6. Rama gave north Kosala and South Kosala to Lava and Kusha respectively

If we generalise these mythemes, we can sum up the following :

An abandoned, pregnant queen of a royal dynasty, found wandering in the jungle, is reared by a fatherly saint in his house. The queen gives birth to twin sons. The children get an education and become heroes by performing miraculous deeds. Finally they regain their ancestors throne by means of their heroic power and with help from the person who had given them shelter.

Some castes and tribes of central India have adapted this particular structure to their own origin myths. Here are some examples.

1. Bhumij Kingdom of Barbhum :

A prince of Rajputana was going on a pilgrimage to Puri with his pregnant wife, who delivered twins near Barbhum. They were left there without the knowledge of the king. A pig reared the twins. A Bhumij of the Gjalgu clan rescued the twins from the pig and named them Svetavaraha and Nathavaraha. Raja Vikramajit of Patkum, convinced of the Kshatriya parentage of the twins, gave them his kingdom (Sinha 1962 : 1-34).

2. The Naga king of Chhotanagpur :

A serpent god Pundarika Naga, taking the form of a brahman, united with a brahman girl, who delivered a child near Suetambe on the way to Puri. The child reared by Madramunda, was known as Phanik Mukut Ray. He subsequently became the Raja of that kingdom (adopted as Nagavamsi Chhatri) (Ibid).

3. The Chauhans of Central India :

Ashavati, the pregnant queen of Hamir Deo, the Chauhan ruler of Manikgarh, was found wandering helpessly in Ramud forest. A Binjhal tribal chief reared her as his own daughter. She had a son and named him Ramaideo. He was taught by a brahman, Chakradhar Panigrahi, of the kingdom of Patna where eight tribal chiefs had established an oligarchic rule. Ramaideo killed them and ascended the throne of Patna. Then he regained his parental kingdom, Manikgarh. (Ramsey, 1910 : 281-303)

4. The Raj Gond Myth :

Singhalsai, the Rajgond king of Bindra – Nawagarh was killed by a Bhunjia tribal chief in a battle.His pregnant queen, while wandering helplessly in the jungle, was given shelter by a brahman of Patna. She gave birth to a son, whom they named Kachra Dharua. He grew up to be a hero, killed the Bhunjia chief and regained his parental kingdom (Gupta 1977 : 159).

The Bhunjia tribal chief of Kholagarh was killed by a Gond named Kumdaphulia Raja. The chiefs pregnant, helpless wife was given shelter by a potter. She gave birth to a child whom they named Tulsivir. He regained Kholagarh by killing Kumdaphulia Gond. (The origin myth of the Bhunjia tribe of Khalna in the district of Kalahandi is collected by the author, the substance of which is similar to the above origin myth. The informant is Diga Chinda,

a village headmen of 68 years, who belongs to the Bhunjia tribe.)

We come across similar elements in the origin myths of the royal chieftains of Kawardha, Raigarh, Sakti, Korea and Jashpur (Sinha, 1962).

The above origin myths of different castes and tribes probably depict the same paradigm with a similar objective, i.e. to show their origins in the solar dynasty of Indian mythology. The Ramayana is a story of the kings of the solar dynasty. So they reinforce the stories about the origins of their ruling dynasties by adapting relevant parts of the Lava-Kusha story. Both Sinha and Srinivas, after studying the caste system of Indian society, have opined that with the help of brahmans, many castes and tribes have gained higher social, political and caste status through the process of Sanskritization.

In the folk oral epics of Central India, especially in Chhattisgarh and western Orissa, we may find some elements of Ramayana influence. Two folk epics are analyed here in the context of their ethnic cultures and traditions, to show the influence on them of the Ramayana. The first folk epic has been collected from the Gaur (milkman) caste of Kalahandi. It is known as bansgeet. Bans (bamboo) is a three-feet-long musical instrument with five holes in it, which is played by a flutist at the time of singing the epic. The name of the song, derived from the musical instrument, is also bansgeet. The singing continues for nights together. This epic song represents the ethnic culture and tradition of the Gaur caste of western Orissa. In Chhatisgarh also the popularity of bansgeet is predominant, with similar forms and matter, though the language is different from that of western Orissa. The Gaur bard Bahjan Nial of Kapsi village in Kalahandi district is the informant. The name of the epic is Kotrabaina-Ramela, the names of

the hero and heroine.

The story form of the folk epic is as follows:

Kotrbaina was a village farmer. His job was to tend sheep and cows and to sell milk and curd. His wife Ramela was extremely beautiful. She had a six-month-old child. The king of the land had an eye for beautiful women. Kotrabaina prevented his wife from going to Bendul city to sell milk or curds as he was constantly afraid that if the king came to know of beautiful Ramela he might abduct her. One day, when Kotrabaina was away visiting his sister, Ramela could not resist her desire to visit Bendul City. She went there with her milk and curd, leaving her child with her nanad (husband's sister). The king's soldiers saw her and subsequently the king forcibly took her to his palace.

While Kotrabaina was asleep in his sister's house, his clan deity showed him the abduction of Ramela in a dream. Hurriedly he returned home to find that the dream was true. He gathered his twelve Lakh bulls and twelve lakh sheep, along with a magical bull named Kurmel Sandh and Sheep named Ultia Gadra, and attacked the city in order to free Ramela from the clutches of the king. The cattle and sheep destroyed the whole city. Kotrbaina killed the king and freed Ramela. But Gaur society was not ready to accept Ramela without testing her chastity, as she had been abducted by the evil king. To prove her chastity, she arranged an ordeal by fire and passed it. But the society wanted to test her again, and put forward the condition that if her six-month-old child crawled from his bed to his mother's breast to suck milk, she would be treated as chaste and accepted by them without hesitation. Ramela was successful in this test as well and she was accepted by Gaur society.

It is obvious that the portion of the Rama-katha from

the abduction of Sita to her fire ordeal has been adopted in the folk epic bansgeet. Rama, Sita and Ravana are respectively parochialized as Kotrabaina, Ramela and the king of Bendul. Lakshmana's warning to Sita not to cross the three lines resembles Kotrabaina's warning to his wife Ramela not to visit Bendul. Sita was abducted by Ravana during lakshmana's absence. Likewise the absence of Kotrabaina gave Ramela the opportunity to visit Bendul city, where she was captured by the lustful king. Rama destroyed Lanka with a large nonhuman army of monkeys and bears. Likewise, kotrabaina took the help of bulls and sheep to destroy Bendul city and rescue Ramela. The Kurmel sandh (bull) and Ultia-gadra (sheep) played roles similar to those of Hanumana and Jambuvana. Sita had to face two tests—the fire ordeal and patalagamana—to prove her purity of character. Similarly, Ramela also faces two tests.

The second folk epic, Lakshmana-jati, is popular among the baiga tribe of Central India. The Baigas are a subtribe of Gonds who originally belonged to the Dravidian group. This folk epic is the local form of the Rama-katha. But a unique feature of this folk epic lies in the reversed roles of Lakshmana and Sita. In the Ramayana, the two fire ordeals were meant to test Sita's chastity. But in the Bajga folk epic, it is Lakshmana who has to face two fire tests in order to prove himself to be chaste or jati. The Baiga bard sings the epic of Lakshmana-jati with a kingri (fiddle) for more than five to six hours at night.

The story of this folk epic is as follows :

In a Baiga village of Jajatpur, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita lived in a hut. They led a Baiga life of cultivation and gathering of food. Lakshmana was a brahmachari living a life of penance. So the people called him Lakshmana-jati. He played the kingri so beautifully that Indrakamini of Indrasabha was attracted by his music. She came down

to martyapura and after crossing many hurdles finally arrived in the bedroom of Lakshmana. Indrakamini fell in love with him even though he was fast asleep. She tried to arouse his passion. But all her attempts to wake him were in vain. In anger she broke her bangles into pieces and scattered them on his bed. She then took off her earrings and left them on his bed with the intention of creating suspicion regarding the relationship between Lakshmana and Sita. Then she went away. Early in the morning, when Sita came to Lakshmana's hut to sweep his bedroom, she found some broken bangles on his bed. She immediately reported this to Rama. Rama came and saw not only the broken bangles but also the earrings on his brother's bed. He woke up Lakshmana and rebuked him for being impure of character. Lakshmana, ignorant of everything, denied it but failed to convince them.

Rama devised a trick to find out the owner of the ornaments. He ordered the makaddam (village headman) to call all the women of the village and he measured the broken bangles and earrings with theirs in order to find out who the woman was who had slept with Lakshmana. But the bangles and earrings did not match any of those belonging to the village women. Rama then asked the makaddam if any woman had remained unexamined, to which the latter replied, only Sitamai is left to be examined. Hearing this, Rama tested Sita. The bangles and earrings fitted her hands and ears. Rama was convinced that she was having an illicit relationship with Lakshmana. He rebuked his younger brother, who protested and offered to prove his innocence by going through a fire test. Rama accepted this challenge and engaged twelve kamars (blacksmiths) to make a circle of fire, which they did. That very day a brahman woman of the village had given birth to a child. Taking that child on his lap, Lakshmana entered the fire circle, and to Rama's surprise, came out unscathed. Next Rama made another fire circle with forest

wood. In the second test also, Lakshmana came out unharmed. Rama was sure of his chastity, but Lakshmana, out of grief, requested Prithvimata (Mother Earth) to give him shelter. Prithvimata unfurled her heart and Lakshmana entered it. (Elwin, 1939 : 22-7).

The above tribal version related to Rama-katha is nothing but the parochialized form of the events of the Ramayana. In this folk epic, however, Lakshmana is more important than Rama or Sita. Lakshmana, in fact, plays the role of Sita. The main motif of the epic is to show the moral character of Lakshmana as jati or saint. The Indrakamini character follows the prototype of Surpanakha. The classical characters of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana have been changed around by Baiga oral tradition in order to solve a social problem. In Baiga society, the brother-in-law's authority over his elder sister-in-law or bhabi is next only to that of the husband. In the tribal society of central India it is not unusual to find sexual relationships between a devar and bhabi. This might conceivably create psychological problems for the elder brother of the family. This phenomenon is found not only among the Baigas but also among the Gond, Kandh, Paharia, Muria, Paraja, Bhatara communities and in some other tribes and castes of central India. As regards the relationship of devar and bhabi of middle India, Verrier Elwin says : "To the aboriginals of middle India Lakshmana is the classic type of the husband's younger brother who, in most communities, is licensed to enjoy and intrigue with the elder's wife." In all these communities there exists the social custom of levirate marriage alongwith the prevalence of extramarital sexual relationships between devar and bhai.

This is expressed even in the folksongs of this locality :

Sajani, nuamaiji anila
Bhauja rasia bhatra pila

Maiji pasori dela

O companion, a young bhatara lad brought a new wife, but because of his liaison with his elder sister-in-law, he forgot his new wife.

Dalkhire, andhara gharake mui dhana ghati gali,
Diara suichhe bali janina parili
Dharidela dena ki re hitigala guna
Se qunake dharikari diara, gale dela chuma.

O Dalkhai (leaf eater), I entered the dark room to dry the paddy, not knowing that brother-in-law was resting there. He embraced me and my nose-pin fell down. Picking up the nose-pin, he kissed me on my check.

In tribal society, the brother-in-law is favoured by the sister-in-law next only to her husband. Here the relationship between devar and bhabi is not that of mother and son, as in the Indian classic tradition, where the elder sister-in-law is more like a mother to the younger brother-in-law as is evident from the characters of Lakshmana and Sita of the Ramayana. (Though this social custom was perhaps prevalent in the Ramayana days. Shankalia observes "the curious social custom of the right of a younger brother to the elder brother's wife... Sita taunted and scolded Lakshmana when the latter was unwilling to leave her alone by saying that he would not be able to marry her (after Rama's death). Probably this was the normal practice, that if the elder brother died, the younger could acquire his wife in marriage" (Shankalia, 1982 : 64).

The Baiga tribe might have taken chaste example of Lakshmana and Sita from the Ramayana and adapted it to their own culture to solve a social problem. This is the process of Sankritization, through which a society tries to become more 'civilized', giving up its 'uncivilized' behavious and customs in the process. The picturization of Lakshmana as jati serves to which the regional society

and culture could draw inspiration.

Besides the folk epics, there is plenty of material bearing allusion to the Rama-katha in the folksongs, proverbs and riddles too. For example, when an aeroplane flies past, the village folk associate it with the pushpaka vimana of Ravana and sing :

sajani, upare jahaja gala,
sitake Ravana churai nela
lankagade puni dela.

O friend, an aeroplane just flew by. Ravana has stolen Sita away to Lankagarh.

In the halia (ploughman) songs of western Orissa, the three brothers Rama, Lakshmana and Bharata, alongwith Sita, are the representatives of a farmer's family of peasant stock. Here Rama ploughs the field, Lakshmana levels it with a log, Bharata supplies seedlings and Sita plants them in the field. The original song is as follows :

Rama Laikahana je duigoti bhai
ke phande nangala ke phande ada mai
palha parasibe bhaire Barata,
rupibe Sitamai

Rama and Lakshmana are two brothers. One ploughs the field and the other levels it. Oh, brother Bhatata, supply the seedlings and Sita will plant them.

There is a proverb which says that those who can endure can wander in the forest and those who cannot ruin themselves (Sahelar ji banbas, nai sahelar udurnas). Another proverb which says a life is lost for either land or a woman alludes to the story of the Mahabharata (for land) and of the Ramayana (for a woman).

There is puranic knowledge hidden in some riddles. The following one, roughly translated, would be : Two pillars, sixteen ribs, thirty-two gates on it. Rama asked

Sita, 'What fruit does is eat ?' The answer is—a spinning wheel.

The other goes like this : One is sitting on the other, one is coming, counting rosary beads. These three have gathered. These three have seventeen heads. Who are they ? The answer to this one is Ravana, Karttikeya and Mayura (peacock).

The third riddle says : An unknown must know it. A couple with twenty-two ears. Who are they ? Ravana and Mandodari is the answer to this one.

Besides the influence of the Ramayana on folk oral tradition, its direct impact on folk rituals cannot be overlooked. Two important rituals influenced by the Ramayana performed in this locality and Bhima worship and Bhatrujibanti Osha.

Bhima Worship :

The worship of Bhima found in the cult rites and rituals and in the mythology of central Indian culture deserves a close micro-study. Bhima is a popular rain god worshipped to get plenty of rain and a good harvest. He is worshipped in the form of a phallus stone symbol along with the tutelary deity in each village (worship-hut). In order to tackle the drought situation, the rain god Bhima is invited through the shamanistic process and worshipped for seven days in the villages in a systematic manner. If the crop situation is bad due to lack of rain, the people believe that only Bhima can bring water from lord Indra. In the folk belief, Bhima is the nephew of Indra, the supreme rain god. As the social status of a nephew commands respect from the uncle, the people believe that Bhima can get water from his uncle Indra without any problem. So in each and every village Bhima is worshipped along with the goddess Mother Earth. To appease Bhima, they invite Kandhen who possesses a young girl of the village and

the two are united ritually. It is a strong belief that by uniting Bhima-Kandhen the village will get rains. It may be observed that in the brahman-dominated villages, people perform Rishyashringa Yajna with pomp and ceremony to get water during a drought. The trend of Rishyashringa Varana (invitation of sage Rishyashringa) is nothing but an imitation of the mythic tradition of the Ramayana. In order to get rid of a severe drought in his country, Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya, had invited Rishyashringa to his kingdom by Jarata (the union of Prakiti and Purusha in the form of Rishyashringa Jarata, symbolizing creation by union). The union of Bhima-Kandhen is the parochialized form of this Ramyanic tradition.

Western Orissa and Chhattisgarh are drought-prone areas. The people of this locality try to appease the gods by worshipping them through the Vedic process as the brahmans do. But as it is not easy for them to get access to the Sanskritic ritual process, they adapt the Rishyashringa jarata episode in the form of the Bhima-Kandhen marriage ritual. To solve the natural problem of drought, the folk people of this locality have imitated that part of the Ramayana where a drought is ended by bringing about rain through a supernatural process.

Bhatrujibanti Osha :

The other ritual celebrated in western Orissa and Chhatisgarh is the Bhatrujibanti Osha or Bhaijiuntia Osha, performed especially by women. There is a belief that king Dasharatha of Ayodhya had married Kaushalya, the princess of South Kosala. As Rama was thus their 'brother', the sisters of this region observed a upavasa or fast before goddess Durga, wishing him a long life. As Kosala is identified with this region, to keep this heritage alive, the women of this region observe the Bhatrujibanti Osha before goddess Durga on the eighth day of the bright moon of

Ashwina. There may be no historic accuracy in this supposed link with Rama, but their faith in their religious rituals cannot be ignored.

Claus says : 'The Mahabharata and Ramayana are continually localized in a welter of folk performance forms all over India' (Claus, 1981 : 17). It is true that by reading or listening to the puranas, the people quench their religious thirst, but it does not satisfy the masses, as only a particular section of the society hears it. But on the folk stage, the whole society, irrespective of age and sex, gets the opportunity to witness the Ramalila, which not only fulfils their religious feelings but also gives them immense pleasure. Their moral values are heightened by its various ideal characters and events.



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A Hero of the Mahabharata in Folklore of Central India

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata-two great epics composed by the great sages Valmiki and Vyasa respectively, have given due importance to each and every part of the subcontinent encompassing lands, forests, mountains, rivers and people of different castes and races. The assimilation of these two epics with the regional and subregional cultures has evolved from a spiritual desire of the people to identify their folklores with the incarnations of Gods. Many regional cultures have deeply been attracted towards the mainstream of the greater Indian tradition through these epics. So these two epics forming the nucleus of Indian culture, have had great influence on the network of regional and subregional cultures irrespective of castes and tribes.

In the study of regional folklore we see that the native cultures have intermingled with the greater Indian tradition multi-dimensionally. The folk associate the similar and suitable aspects of the classical tradition of India reinterpreting it in their socio-cultural settings. Likewise the popular elements prevalent in the folk societies are assimilated in written form and thus the stream of reciprocity in the cycle of oral-written-oral form is significant in the folklore of India, (Ramanujan : 1985 : 5)

In this context the aim of this study is to show how the Mahabharata tradition has influenced the folk tradition of central India in general and western Orissa in particular. The principal character of this study is Bhima the second Pandava in its centre around which all the cultural aspects are interwoven multidimensionally. Bhima is a folk hero in Indian regional traditions. He is reinterpreted in the

folk society as a folk hero and as a raingod with many supernatural deeds to his credit. Here an attempt will be made to see how Bhima has influenced the folk society in respect of its oral narratives and folk rituals.

The area taken for study was known as South Kosala, presently identified with Central India, especially in the Raipur and Bilaspur region of Chhatishgarh and Kalahandi, Bolangir and Sambalpur district of Orissa.

The Capital of south kosala was known as 'Kushavatinagra' after Kusa—the son of Rama. Kusavati Nagra has been identified with some archeological sites of western Orissa and Chhatishgarh which signifies the heritage of this region associated with the tradition of the Ramayana. (Singh Deo : 1987 : 31).

The Risabha Tirtha, the Kala Tirtha and the Badarika Tirtha are some of the sacred centres described in the Vanaparva of Mahabharata (Ibid. p. 23). Bhima conquered North Kosala and Sahadeva the Kantaraka (present Koraput, Kalahandi districts of Orissa adjoining Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh) is described in Vanaparva (Ibid. 23).

In an unpublished manuscript named "Kosal Khanda" it is mentioned that Nagnajit, the king of South Kosala had fought on behalf of the Pandavas in the war of Mahabharata. He had a beautiful daughter named Satya. The king Proclaimed to give his daughter in marriage to the prince who would defeat his seven furious bulls. None but Srikrishna tamed the bulls through his flute and took Satya's hand (Singh Deo. 1987. 64).

Brihdavala, the last Ikshavaku king of South Kosala, was killed in the battle of Kurukshetra. It signifies the puranic accounts associated with this land. (Sahu. 1971.

9).In 4th century A. D. Samudragupta invaded South Kosàla, Mahakantara and Kurala region and defeated the local rulers. It resulted in the onset of the Brahminical influence in this region. (Roy Chaudhuri : 1950 : 538).

The Nalas, the Sarabhapuriyas, the Kalachur and the Soma (Pandu) dynasties ruled over South Kosala from 5th century A. D. to 12th century A. D. chronologically.

In 13th century A. D. Western Orissa was ruled by the Ganga kings of Orissa. Chhatishgarh was ruled by the Kalachuris of Ratanpur. Then came the Chauhans subduing the tribal chieftains of Gonds, Konds and Binjhals. At this time the Naga kings ruled over Kalahandi region after over throwing the Gangas. During this period the local tribal rulers and chieftains were influenced by the Sanskritic traditions established by the Rajput rulers and the Brahman royal priests. From 15th century A. D. the culture of Western Orissa was influenced by the great epic of Mahabharata written by poet Adikavi Sarala Das. He glorified all the regions of Orissa identifying the sacred centres in his epic, associating the characters and events of Mahabharata. In Sarala Mahabharata it is stated that Yudhishthira sent Nakula to south Kosala to invite the king to attend Rajasurya Jajna. Nakula fought with Kalingasena, the king of South Kosala and defeated him. God Nrusimhanatha was worshipped in that tract (Das Sarala, Sabha Parva : 515).

Sacred centres of Western Orissa

Associated with the legend of Mahabharata traditions :

Parimalagiri, also known as Gandhamadan mountain situated in the Sambalpur district of Orissa bears the heritage of puranic and historical accounts of the epics of India.

A legend runs that the mountain Gandhamadana was situated adjacent to mountain Vindhyachala. Hanuman carried Gandhamadan to Lanka to save Lakshmans life and while returning he left it here (Mishra : 1983 : 113). At the bottom of the mountain is situated the temple of Lord Nrusimhanatha. It is a sacred centre with scenic beauty. Several waterfalls associated with the puranic sages and epic heroes and found here. The Kapildhar, the Bhimdhar and the Gadadhar bear the sacred memory of sage Kapila and Bhima, the second Pandava, respectively.

The legend runs that the Pandavas with Draupadi, while wandering in the forest, arrived at the Gandhamadan mountain. They built a hut and lived there on roots and fruits collected by Bhima.

Once Bhima want to have his bath. The water was insufficient for him to take a pleasant bath. So he struck his club on the earth and suddenly another Ganga emerged up with great force. Bhima broke the stone with the club and another fall emerged. Mother Ganga named the two falls as Bhimdhar and Gadadhar after Bhima.

The place is identified with the heroic and supernatural deeds of Bhima such as killing a demon, falling in love with wild girls, building up a stone house (Bhim modua) playing with huge stone balls (bati and stone oven and spoon). A cave in this mountain is called Panchu Pandavas Khol where Nakula, the fourth Pandava, carved the figures of five brothers on the wall with his weapon (kunta).

A mango tree which is believed to bear the fruits throughout the year is associated with a legend that the five Pandavas including Draupadi disclosed their secret

truth and the ripened mango sprouted up through which they all appeased a guest sent by the wicked Duryodhana, to demolish the virtue of Yudhishthira.

Also many legends of the Ramayana are associated with this sacred centre to validate the faith of the folk with the epic traditions of India.

The Sunabeda plateau of Katapar Puruvadi mountain range bears the mythical legend of Mahadeo Parvati, Bhima as their servant. This legend is none other than the creation myth of the Gonds.

Bhimkhoj (a place in Kalahandi where the foot print of Bhima is woshipped), the Pancha Pandav temple at the top of Mahendragiri, Godhas, a fall in Maraguda valley in Kalahandi, are also specimens associated with Bhima.

Some images in a cave in the Mahadeo-Manda hill in Chandwa village in Lohardaga block in Ranchi district of Bihar bear the memory of epic hero Bhima. Also a tunnel named "Bhim chulha" in kotong village of Chhatarpur Block in Bihar is associated with Bhima of Mahabharata. It is said that Bhima used the stone tunnel as an oven. (Sahay : 1975 : 18)

Retention of religious tradition chiefly depends upon folklore and mythology. In the folk tradition of central India distribution of Bhima cult is equally found in myth, rituals, folkdramas. In the oral narratives he is picturized as a culture hero. Some specimens are as follows :

Gond Creation Myth

Mahadeo created earth after the deluge. Next he created nature, birds, animals and finally, man. The Gonds are the first son of Mahadeo and Parvati. They all were

living on roots, fruits and hunting of forest animals. But they were always hungry and mahadeo could not provide them with sufficient food. So Parvati advised him to start the cultivation of paddy. They arranged bulls, made a plough, Plough-share and sent Bhima to Kuvera—the god of wealth for paddy seeds.

Bhima borrowed sixty putis (one puti is equal to eighty Kgs.) of seeds from Kuvera assuring to repay him after the harvest. Bhima ploughed the lands of Sunabeda, Rupabeda, Changurbeda, Mangurdeda and Mahadeo sowed the paddy. The harvest was bountiful. Bhima reaped the crop, gathered on the threshing floor of sunabeda lifting the whole of it by two and a half ungas. Mahadeo asked "How much paddy did you reap ? Bhima replied, "Two and a half ungas". Mahadeo felt that the paddy were too little even to repay Kuvera. So out of anger he ordered him to set fire to paddy. Bhima unwittingly burnt the paddy. The flame and smoke covered nether region and heaven.

Brahma, Vishnu, Vasuki, Indra and other gods arrived at Sunabeda to see what the matter was. They all knew that the amount of paddy measured by Bhima as two and a half ungas was in fact too much for Mahadeo. Without understanding it the latter had done so.

So all the gods extinguished the fire and the remaining saved from the heap of the half burnt paddies were named according to the colour as Kalia, Setka, Pora, Chinger, etc.

Mahadeo, again started cultivation and from him only the Gonds learnt the technique of farming.

Similar myths are found in all over central India, with regional variations. In the origin myth of the Gonds

of Mandala region of Madhya Pradesh the Supreme god of the Gonds along with the mother goddess Earth were brought to the earth by Bhima—the second Pandava. Kotma (Kunti) had helped Bhima in securing earth after deluge (Fuchs : 1960 : 1-16). Also in the myth of salvation of mankind from fire and hunger, and in the myth of the beginning of cultivation both Kotma (Kunti) and Bhima had assisted Bhagwan. (Ibid)

Bhimasidi—A Mythical Epic of the Konds

A mythical epic named Bhimasidi is recited by 'Boguas'—a distinct off shoot of Konds, also the bards. The epic is sung, assisted by a musical string instrument. A detailed description of Bhima, the culture hero of the Konds is found in this epic.

The story runs as follows :

Bhima wanted to come often to the earth taking human form. His mother asked him not to go to the earth, for human beings are not clean in heart and body. But Bhima came down to the earth, took the form of a beggar, weak emaciated full of wound and worms.

In disguise he reached the village of Beska padar. The headman, Umradi Jani belonged to Kond tribe. Both the Jani and his wife took pity on the beggar and gave him food and shelter. But the two daughters of Jani, Konden Rani and Dumerrani did not like for his ugliness and festering wounds. So they drove him out of their house.

While the two sisters were taking their bath by putting off their clothes, Bhima invoked his father Pavanvan devta (god Vayu) to fly away their clothes and to put them in their 'Jhapi'—a round shaped bamboo box in their house. Bhima played many tricks and jokes on

them which may be compared to the episode of vastra harana of Sri Krishna Lila. He also took the form of a tiger, a bear and a monster and played with the girls.

While working in the field, Bhima met the Jani and requested him to keep him as his servant, to repay the food and shelter he had offered him. Bhima with his miraculous power levelled the field by clearing the trees and bushes. He again invoked his father Pavanvir devta to allot rain from heaven to saturate the field for ploughing. Thus, he brought down rains overnight to make the field suitable for cultivation.

Next morning the Jani found the land fit for cultivation, praised Bhima for his work and kept him as his bridegroom in service (gharjian). In course of his stay, he did many super human works. He discovered ardent spirit of mahua (bassia latifolia), invented iron and gave a wind machine to the blacksmith, tamed the wild buffaloes, sowed paddy, etc. But due to the lack of rain the seedlings were likely to dry. So the son of Jani set fire by the paddy field. Bhima made rain and extinguished the fire and discovered different kinds of paddy grains.

One day the two sisters discovered a handsome young man like a prince, instead of the beggar, who was none other than Bhima. They came to know of his real identity and fell in love with him. Both of them wanted to marry him.

Bhima wanted to marry both of them, one as a wedded wife and the other as a concubine, according to the social custom of Kond society that permits the husband to marry his wife's sister. After the marriage of Bhima, he put the two sisters under his Ungas—arms and fled to heaven. In the mid sky, the younger sister fell down

to the earth and turned into fig tree. Bhima said, "Let your fruits be full of worms. But as I was in love with you, you will be regarded as Dumer Rani and people will worship me in you." Since then people worship Bhima under a fig tree.

BHIMA AS THE PROGENITOR OF KOYAS :

The Koyas of Koraput regard Bhima as their first progenitor. While wandering in the jungle Bhima met a tribal maiden and fell in love with her. The girl gave birth to a child who was the first Koya on the earth.

PANDWANI SONG :

"Pandavai" is the Chhatisgarhi version of Mahabharata with Bhima as its legnday hero whose deeds and adventures form a major part of the legend. (Dube : 1947 : 8). In these narratives the universal characters and events are reinterpreted in the cultural setting of Chhatisgarh. Arjun, Bhima, Nakula, Siva, Dropadi, Parvati and other heroes and heroines have been redesigned according to the local imagination of Chhatisgarh. Pandavani song is an oral epic performed by a woman assisted by a group of musicians. The singer holds a stringed instrument while singing.

Bhima is associated with the etiological myths of central India. The Kamar tribes of central India consider Bhima as their culture hero. The content of the myth resembles the Gond creation myth (Elwin : 1954 : 163)

2. The Bhunjia tribe of Kalahandi regards Bhima as the inventor of the ardent spirit bassia latifolia – Mahul. Another myth of Bhunjias related to Bhima's fight with Bichhalwar kuar is appended in Elwin's collections

(Elwin : 1954 : 148 & 184).

BHIMA IN BINJHAL MYTH :

A creation myth as to how leech took its birth described by the Binjhals is as follows :

Kichak served Mahadeo and was given a boon of great strength. He became lusty and seduced the virtue of virgin girls. Bhima could know this and fought with him. He caught him in fire. From the ashes of Kichak emerged a leech getting rain water on it. (Elwin : 1954 : 215)

MAHABHARATA IN PERFORMING FOLK ARTS :

The Bharat Leela, Kichakabadha, Nilendri Harana, Sovavati Harana, Karana Vadha, Abhimanyu Vadha, Kapata Pasa, Rajasuya Jajna, Rukmini Vivaha, Draupadi Vastraharana, Agnat Vanavasa and Parijat Harana are some of the popular folk dramas drawn from the episodes of Mahabharata in Western Orissa.

The performance of Pandvani song by a woman with a stringed instrument in her hand with narrative style attracks the audience. Dandanata—a ritualistic folk drama of Saiva cult performed in Western Orissa is endowed with the story of cultivator Siva assisted by Bhima. On the folk stage, Bhima calls up all the girls of the village to work in the field. On the stage Bhima sings a song invoking their names such as Basmati, Kalikhuji, Puagi, Sapuri, Lochei, Huna etc. These are the names of the paddy sowed in the field. The paddy has been imagined as women laborers by the local dramatists. The representation of paddy as women symbolises the common character of both seed and woman bearing the power of fertility and creativity.

In some Dandanata, cultivation by Siva is not staged but recited in the daytime in a public gathering. This ritual is known as 'dhulidanda'—The episode of cultivation by Siva is projected here assisted with musical instruments. The ritual is associated with fertility cult.

Some castes and tribes of central India have associated their origin and ancestry with the Pandavas and Kauravas of Mahabharata. The Korwa tribe of Chhatisgarh claim their ancestry from the Kauravas.

The Kumbhars(potters) of this region claim that during the Swayamvara of Draupadi, the Pandavas with mother Kunti had taken shelter in their house. Since then the Kumbharas identify themselves as 'pandey'—a derivative word of Pandava.

BHIMA—A SUB-TRIBE OF GONDS:

In Mandala region of Madhya Pradesh a small community is identified as Bhima—an offshoot of Gonds. They are musicians professionally performing dance, music in the ritualistic ceremony of their masters. They play on a musical instrument called 'Tuma'—made of gourd and bamboo.

Besides, the Rautia tribes of Sundergarh claim their ancestry from sage Raivata in Dwapara age. They recite a glorious epic of their ethnic origin associated with the tradition of Mahabharata.

BHIMA—AS RAINGOD:

"Bhima otherwise known as Bhimsen, Bimai, Bhimul is worshipped as a rain god in India" (Elwin : 1950 : 41). In Western Orissa Bhima is imagined as twelve brothers, each representing an occupation signifying his name.

Bhima is worshipped in a phallic stone symbol in the village 'Gudi' – worship hut, beside the mother goddess – Earth. People irrespective of tribal and folk worship him. When the scarcity of rain is felt he is invoked by a shaman assisted by the village priest and rain is assured by propitiating him with black cock, liquor, incense etc.

In some villages a symbolic marriage ritual is instituted between Bhima and 'Konden' – a maiden from a kond tribe to assure rain.

A rigid and complex worship system of Bhima's marriage is performed for three to seven days by ten to twelve villages. He is offered a virgin girl, the daughter of Kond priest (Jani). It is celebrated once in every twelve years. The girls, after institution of marriage with god Bhima, leads a life of austerity and she is respected by her community. After her death she is worshipped with Bhima as goddess Konden.

BHIMA IN REGIONAL WRITTEN TRADITIONS

In Sanskrit Mahabharat Bhima, the second Pandava is describes as "a type of brute courage and strength, with a gigantic stature, impetuous, irascible with voracious appetite" (Wilkins : 1968 : 415-16). Imitating the Sanskritic tradition the poets of regional literatures have portrayed the events and characters of the Mahabharata according to their regional socio-cultural settings. The motif found in the oral narratives in a sub-regional culture resemble the motifs of written traditions. They suggest the fact that the regional poets have adopted the powerful folk elements in reshaping their regional literatures. This could be evident from the study of written and oral Mahabharata of regional cultures.

The epic of 'Bhima charita' by poet Rama Saraswati in Assamese, Siva Paravati marriage by poet Vidyapati

in Maithili, Oriya Mahabharata by poet Sarala Das are endowed with the similar folk elements as embodied in the original text of Mahabharata. In all the oral and written literature Bhima's character resembles with the tribal or folk heroes with similar motifs.

The popular folk elements found both in oral and written forms in Orissa in regard to the episodes of Mahabharata may be dated back to the 15th-16th century A.D. The hero characters found in the oral epics, ballads and narratives have striking resemblance with the Pandavas of Mahabharata. It could be evident from the study of the second Pandava Bhima in oral and written texts.

Sarala Das, in his Oriya Mahabharata, described the birth of Bhima with the motifs of miraculous happenings when a hero is born. The story runs as follows :

The story goes that while Pandu with Kunti and Madri were living atop the Satasrunga mountain, Kunti gave birth to Bhima by invoking "Vayu" the wind god. Just then the ferocious roar of a tiger was heard and leaving the baby Kunti ran away. It just happened that the crying new born's foot struck the tiger's temple and the animal was dead. Next moment a *'Devapurusa'* emerged from the dead tiger's body and went heavenward. The tiger was an accursed Gandharva preordained to get back his former self through such an episode.

Next child Bhima hit the 'Satatsringha mountain which broke into pieces. The mountain cursed Bhima that he would be defeated in the battle. When Kunti learnt it she prayed to Satasrunga to revoke the curse. Pleased with Kunti's pleading the mountain could only modify the curse in as sush as that in the first of the engagements in a battle Bhima would be defeated, but by enchanting

the name of Satasrunga, his strength would dramatically increase and he would surely win any battle.

Kunti, out of gratitude blessed the mountain that though he had been broken into pieces struck by Bhima's feet, all broken stones would be worshipped in all the villages. All the gods and goddesses would be animated in each stone. (Das, Sarala : Adiparva)

BHIMA AS A HERO DISGUISED :

In the Birata Parva of Sarala Mahabharata an episode runs that the Pandavas were in exile in Matsyadesa. They all were in disguise concealing their real identity and name. Bhima became Ballabha Panda, a cook in the royal kitchen of the king of Birata. Yudhisthira, as a counsel in the court known as Kuntabhoja was dearer to the king and gave him the company in the game of dice.

Once a tribal warrior named pardesimalla came to the king with a tiger and challenged the king to have a combat between Kichaka (the great hero of Virata Rajya, also the king's brother-in-law) and this tiger. The king did not agree to spare kichaka for this. Yudhisthira advised the king to invite Ballabha (Bhima) to have a fight with the tiger. Ballabha killed the tiger after a furious fight.

Once again the tribal warrior came to the king and challenged him for a fight with Kichaka, but ultimately killed by Ballabha. (in the Mahabharata : Birata Parva)

BHIMA AND KUVERA :

Once a terrible drought visited the kingdom of Yudhisthira. To save his subjects from this disaster, Yudhisthira sent Bhima to Kuvera, the god of wealth. Bhima reached Kuvera's palace and saw an ugly man

engaged in separating paddy grains from sand and pebbles. Bhima inquired of Kuvera and became surprised to know that the man he was talking to was none other than Kuvera. He thought that a man who is so greedy of saving a few grains, how could he be able to tackle the drought situation by providing him with one lakh carts of paddy bages.

Bhima thought it futile to deliver the message to Kuvera. However on being asked he expressed his purpose of arrival and Kuvera gladly consented to send one lakh cart loads of paddy bags to his kingdom to face the drought.

Coming with the carts Bhima ran into difficulty when he had to cross a tract of muddy road. The carts got stuck and he could do nothing to retrieve them. Undone, he came back to Kuvera for a solution. Kuvera only smiled and asked Bhima to throw ten thousand cart-loads of paddy bags into the mud to ensure a smooth passage of other carts and readily replenished the grains so to be lost.

At this Bhima could not suppress his surprise. He requested Kuvera to solve the riddle of how he (Kuvera) could advise to throw away such a huge store he could spent so much time to save a few grains from the pebbles. Kuvera replied, property is saved to spend in this way. (Das N. : 1977 : 417-19)

Distribution of Bhima god in the religio-cultural tradition in central India is a complex phenomenon. Worship of Bhima as a hero in myths, legends, folk epics and in other oral narratives is a subject of study in the subregional tradition of central India.

Description of South Kosala found in the Sanskrit Mahabharata and in Oriya Mahabharata reveals the rich heritage of this land in remote past., encompassing recent past. The tract of South Kosala has been the homeland

of many tribes and castes from time immemorial. The Gonds, Konds, Baigas, Binjhals, Kamars, Bhunjias, and many other communities have a rich cultural tradition of their own, and which represents their antochthonous culture. Migration of Aryans into this tract has given rise to the influence of Brahmanic and Vedic culture on the local cultural substratum, which may be dated back to 5th century A. D.

Though the passage of time the Aryans absorbed the tribal culture into their own culture and the tribal communities in course of their interaction with the Aryan Kings and their Brahaman priests, adopted the Aryan culture absorbing the suitable and similar elements of it into their own.

So, the continuous co-existence of local and universal cultures in this region has given rise to a distinct cultural pattern of folklore. Even the sacred centres in the tribal regions have been reinterpreted with the episoles of Ramayan and Mahabharata. The Chauhan kings of western orissa have incorporated the mythical characters and events in the course of the exploitation of the natural resources, archaeological sites and in the sacred centres of tribal importance in 15th to 18th century A. D.

The creation myths of the tribal central India bear the imprint of both the sanskritic traditions and tribal tradition. While studying the tribal myths of central India, Blackburn is of the opinion that : "The 900-700 B. C. date for the Brahmanas in no way proves that oral visions did not exist contemporaneously or an earlier date among central India tribes."

He further adds "because mythology and more particularly creation myths, is more abstract, less

associated with local details, and therefore transcendent, it is consequently more susceptible to external influence (Blackburn : 1977 : 198). Giving instances of deluge on earth, earth diver motifs, creation of myths of human being he compared the Sanskritic-Vedic myths and tribal myths with that of the American myths and inferred that there must be a source of these myths from where both have accepted and though departed in course of time have reminiscences of it in the form of oral traditions. So it may be inferred that the tract of central India is not an isolated land where the influence of greater Indian traditions have not been at work. Further the reign of the kings by the Brahmanic tradition reveals the truth.

Central Indian myths, sociologically, bear the impact of the techno-economic invention of agricultural equipments, use of bull and buffalo, borrowing of paddy, reaping and gathering of paddy. The transformation of food-gathering habit into food producing character with these inventions made the primitive tribal communities change into a peasant society. So to retain the memorable events of their techno-economic transformation they validated the myth through rituals in their society regarding Mahadeo, the supreme god, as the first cultivator of the creation and Bhima, his servant as rain maker and god of harvest.

A curiosity arises as to how the second Pandava became the servant of Siva. In this region synchronization of Saiva faith and Vaishnava faith has taken place from 14th century A. D. to 18th century A. D. Bhimacharita by Rama Saraswati in Assemese, Siva—Paravati marriage in maithili and Bhojpuri, Kalasha Chautisa in Oriya, Siva mangal in Bengali and Brahmanda Purana by poet paramananda in Oriya have the motifs of cultivator Siva, Bhima being his servant. Bhima charita is sung as a

ritual song in Assamese folk society for the well being of bride and bridegroom at the time of marriage. In Midnapur region of West Bengal Bhim Thakur is the counterpart of Vishnu, representing harvest god. So in middle eastern India association of Bhima with fertility cult is a popular religious rite.

Elwin, while analysing the popularity of worshipping Bhima in central India is of the opinion that, "the cult of Bhimsen is strange and interesting. Originally one of the five pandav brothers he had been selected out of the entire body of Hindu legend for special honour by the aboriginal tribes. To the baigas he is the god of rains. To the Gonds he is the embodiment of manly strength. He is associated mainly with rocks, mountains and rivers." (Elwin : 1954 ; 123)

BHIMA AS CULTURE HERO :

Hero worship is found in tribal India. The tribal communities regard those men heroes who could solve their problem, perform some miracles or show some superhuman deeds, which is impossible for a common man. In tribal belief and worldview worship of man is very important phenomenon. The ancestors, the first progenitor, the legendary heroes, the chieftains, their life giver have been worshipped by them as their demigods— even as supreme god. The ancestors of recent past animated in a stone symbol are worshipped as gods.

The physical stature and mental state of Bhima have striking resemblance with their culture heroes. So the tribal communities have adopted Bhima, the second Pandava, as their cultural hero.

Birth of Bhima, along with his numerous super human deeds, is nothing but the hero pattern of central

Indian oral narratives. The description of heroes in the folk ballads, epics, legends and tales has striking resemblance to that of Bhima, the second Pandava.

Birth of a hero is symbolized with miraculous events. Bhima's birth thus, was followed by two events such as the tiger's death and creaking of Satasringha mountain by his foot stroke. Similarly, the culture hero of the Gonds, Binjhals, Banjaras and Paharias have the same motifs, i.e. a miraculous events would take place when a hero is born.

Some episodes of Vanaparva and Birataparava are very much popular in the tribal and folk society of this region, especially while wanderings the Pandava were in disguise concealing their actual identities, in fear of Duryodhana. It is so in the Vanaprova and Birataparva of Mahabharats composed by poet Sarala Das. Both Bhima and Arjuna had fallen in love with the tribal maidens. Kunit had forbidden them in some cases.

Now, following this episode, if we compare the Kond epic (Bhima sidi) described in this text it would be evident how the forest dwellers have glorified their own region incorporating the characters of Mahabharata. In Kond epic Bhima's mother had forbidden him not to come down to earth and to avoid relationship with human being. But Bhima came, fell in love with the girls, married them, adopted the tribal customs of performing bride service in the house of Jani – the Kond headman. Disguises of Bhima as a beggar, in the house of Jani signifies the 'agnyatavasa' of the Pandavas in Vanaparva and Virataparva. The Konds believe that Bhima had married their girls.

Similarly killing of a tiger, taming wild buffaloes, doing agricultural work, discovering liquor, inventing

iron, bringing rain water for the fields for irrigation, etc., are some of the motifs common in the oral narratives of this region. The myths and epics of Bhima available in this region are nothing but the puranic counterpart of the secular oral narratives prevalent in the larger society.

In Virataparva, disguise of Bhima, killing a tiger, killing a tribal chief (Pradeshi malla), killing of Kichaka and many other motifs resemble the exploits of Ramai Deo – the Founder of Chauhan dynasty in South Kosala in 14th century A. D. Gangadhar Mishra, a court poet of Chauhan king of Sambalpur, had written a sanskrit epic named Kosalanada Kavya describing the Chauhan origin in India and their migration to South Kosala. In this epic, Ramai Deo, the posthumous child of Hamirdeo and queen Ashavati, took his birth in the house of a Binjhal chief and later, after being trained up by a brahman named Chakradhara Panigrahi, became a famous warrior. The Kingdom of Patan was them ruled over by the tribal chieftains of Gonds, Konds, Binjhals. They were eight in number and had formed an oligarchic form of Government in Western Orissa. At that time a tiger became furious and killed the people. Ramai Deo killed the tiger with his bow and proved his valour. Next he fought with the tribal chiefs, defeated them, finally killed them and established monarchy in western Orissa. The episode of killing a tiger, killing tribal chiefs resembles the episode of Bhima in Virataparva. So it is evident that Bhima has been portrayed by the poets in regional and sub-regional traditions as the local culture hero.

Other etiological myths related to Bhima found in large number depict the tribal worldview in close proximity with the mythical traditions.

Bhima has lost his universal epic personality in this region through the process of tribalsation.

The performing folk arts in this region have popularised the episodes of Mahabharata in a living manner to the non-literate folk society. Through the media the folk reproduce the episodes according to their own imagination interpolating the original texts, designing them parochially and in the process absorbing sanskritic elements into the culture pattern.

In their desire to make their own culture sanskritized, the Pandays (potters) the Bhimas (a sub-caste of the Gonds), the Rautias (descendants of sage Raivata), have identified their ethnic origin with the heroes and sage of Mahabharata.

The Mundas, The Bondas and such other tribes regard Bhima as their supreme god. He is the counterpart of sun-god or sky god. But the Baigas, the Gonds and the Bhunjias regard Bhima as the servant of Mahadeo Siva. As the Santals and the Mundas supreme God is sun god, Bhima is imagined as the demigod or the Sun or as Vayugod. But in Dravidian ethnic group Mahadeo is worshipped as supreme god, and Dharnimate as Earth Mother goddess. Bima is their servant. So the status of Bhima differs in different ethnic groups. However all the tribals appease Bhima with liquor and hen which signifies that he is tribalised.

Bhima is the son of Vayu. It is through Vayu, that the rain comes. So considering Bhima as a rain maker, people worship him.

SANCTION OF NATURE THROUGH CULTURE :

The tribal tract of central India is seriously affected by water scarcity and drought situation. So to get ample rain and to tide over the drought situation, people of this region worship Bhima. The ritual of Bhima-konden

marriage at the time of drought may be compared with the marriage ritual of Rasyassinga Jajan in Ayodhya to bring down rain as described in the Ramayan. Popular folk narrative of Bhima borrowing paddy from Kuvera to solve the drought situation signifies the same process.

CONCLUSION :

Folk knowledge has always been the conglomeration of regimented episodes of puranas and mythologies. They accept the episodes which are suitable and adaptable to their psycho sociological needs. The desire to be sanskritized following the puranic traditions has given rise to the process of the absorption of their elements with that of the greater Indian traditions. So there is a co-existence to both the traditions through interaction.

NOTES :

1. 'Unga' is a derivative word of 'anga'. The paddy was two and a half unga's for Bhima had who as enormous stature and the whole harvest could be carried under his arms. Mahadeo could not understand it.

2. Another myth of Bhima in kamar tribes : "Drupatta" (Draupadi) was the wife of five Pandava brothers. Every evening she used to massage each of them with oil. But for some reason Bhimsen did not approve of this. So one day Bhimsen put a thick log of wood in his bed and covered it with a sheet and said to his servant, go and call Drupattabai quickly. I have got fever and want her to massage me. When the servant had gone, Bhimsen hid under the bed.

   Drupatta came in a hurry, she did not remove the sheet but at once proceeded to massage the figure on the bed. She worked on it till she was tired. Then at last she

lifted the sheet and saw that there was nothing but a log of wood. Under the bed Bhimsen burst laughing. Drupatta cried in temper "Let this would henceforth grow thorns so that no one else will ever be able to massage it". At once thorns sprouted all over the log and planed it in his garden and it grew up as a bombox tree. (Elwin : 1954 : 121)

3. The heroes of Mahabharta worshipped as folk deities are predominant all over India. Bhima is worshipped in Midnpur (west Bengal). Benaras, Rajasthan, Mandhya Pradesh and in western Orissa. Bhima is worshipped in Benaras. Draupadi amma or Daupadi cult associated with goddess Durga is predominanat in South India.



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Drought in the Folklore of Kalahandi

Kalahandi is a district in the State of Orissa which was Known as Mahakantara (great forest) in ancient India, is now, no more than a wasteland. The people of this land who were once self-sufficient and self-contented with abundant forest product and ample harvest, are now lacking the firewood and facing food problem. The land of Kalahandi which was famous for its bumper paddy cultivation, is now depending upon external helps. Depending on food gathering and food producing process, the people of this region were self-sufficient.

Kalahandi, also known as Karunda Mandal is the treasure of precious stones like karandam (Manik), Garent (red stone), Beruz, Neelam (blue stone), and Alexandra etc. Mr. P. k. Deo, the Ex Maharaja of kalahandi, in one of his articles expressed his view that the historical significance of naming kalahandi as Karunda. Mandala is based on the availability of karundam in this region. Manikeswari (the goddess of Manikya) the clan deity of the Naga kings of kalahandi may have also necessitated the adoption of the name.

The more important fact is that since 1985 Kalahandi has been well-known for its misfortune being affected by acute drought, but merchants from distant places of our country and abroad are arriving at kalahandi to build up their good fortunes, exploiting the native soil for getting precious stones. On the other hand the indigenous people of this land, being incapable of providing food to members of their poor family are leaving their motherland, migrating to other parts of India. About one lakh residents of kalahandi and Bolangir districts of Orissa (most of them Gaurs, and communities belonging

to scheduled tribe/ scheduled Caste categories) have settled down in Raipur town of Chhatishgarh where a slum is known as "Raipur ka Narak" (the hell of Raipur). Thus in native land, as also in the area of resettlement the life of the poor people of kalahandi is no better than a curse.

II

Kalahandi hits the headlines in newspapers for the drought situation that has broken the economic backbone of the cultivators. A long history of drought covering more than a century in kalahandi has occurred. Drought had appeared in kalahandi in 1868, 1884 and 1897. The famine of 1899 which is otherwise known as "Chhapan Salar durbhikshya" has seriously influenced the people to such an extent that if a child hankers for food her mother tells the child that "why are you hankering like a drought-sticken of Chhapan sal ?" "The effect of the famine," according to the District Gazeetters, "were of a magnitude unprecedented in any previous famine." This famine left a terrible socio-economic gloom in this area. In 1919-1920 another drought occurred followed by cholera, influenza and malnutrition due to lack of food stuff. A series of drought in 1922-1923, 1925-1926. 1929-1930, 1954-1955 and 1955-56 occurred in Kalahandi.

The terrible drought of 1965-66 which occurred in Kalahandi totally broke down the economic backbone of the people. Due to lack of rain, three-fourth crop production failed. The effect of the drought continued to be felt in 1967. As regards this drought, the following description from the District Gazetters is worth-quoting.

"The bulk of the population which constituted the landless agricultural labourers became unemployed due to suspension of all sorts of agricultural operations. The worst sufferers were the landed gentry, who, because of the drought, could not reap a harvest nor could they take

to manual labour to which they were not accustomed. The pastures lost the greenery and the bovine population therefore were equally starved. Everywhere was an acute shortage of water."

Again in 1974-75 and in 1985 drought occurred like the human census occurring once in ten years. After the severe drought of 1956 and 1966, the rich cultivators of this area came down to the status of middle class cultivators and the middle class cultivators into ordinary one. They all turned into "sukhbasis". The daily wage labourers and landless are generally called 'sukhbasi' in Kalahandi meaning those who live happily. A proverb for 'sukhbasi' runs thus : 'Gai nai goru, sukhe nid karu' which means the men without cattle have happy sound sleep.

Continuous occurrence of drought alongwith the irregular rainfall have resulted in crop failure and thus people became poorer to poorer. The Bureau of Statistics and Economics, Orissa has analysed the rainfall of South Western Kalahandi and has reported that "there is an year of drought in every three or four years."

Besides a long history of drought, the socio-economic traditions existing in the society are the main cause of creating a class distinction among the people of Kalahandi. The fact that the agricultural products in the rural Kalahandi are being controlled by the urban businessmen is one of the causes of economic-disparity. Moreover the customs of loan, and mortgage current in the society are the major sources of exploitation. Certain forms of mortgage like Bandha, Kalantaria, Bandhasaheji, and Katti, and that of labour systems like goti, halia (annual servant), bahabandha and Kalibhuti, thika* etc.; have debackled the normal way of peasant life. Alongwith the drought the problems such as rural unemployment, non-

industrialisation, growth of population and rapid deforestation are some of the major problems of Kalahandi. Hence being gripped both by nature and men, the rural inhabitant of Kalahandi has found no other way of survival. As a result either he has migrated from his motherland or lived in the westeland as a crippled soldier.

III

In this section an attempt has been made to investigate the folk psychology reflected in the oral traditions of this locality. Being affected by the drought the folk mind has tried to compensate their natural loss in their cultural and ideological setback. As per their folk belief this is a country where miracles are expected as solutions for social problems, through the socio-political process or some supernatural forces.

It is natural that the folk mind of Kalahandi has no concrete soulutions for a greater social problem like drought. But the impossibility of solutions to such problems in reality is done up in imagination. Traditionally the culture of the people is shaped according to its natural adaptability. This may be examined through a folk tale of Kalahandi. The place of collection of this folktale is village Boden, where Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the erstwhile Prime Minister of India had to cancel his visit due to lack of communication and heavy downpour of rain. The tale is as follows :

"Once Indra, the rain deity of heaven, being annoyed with the people for he was not worshipped, promised not to pour rain on the earth for twelve years, which resulted in a terrible famine in the said region. The cattle started dying due to shortage of water and grass. Even people started dying of starvation."

Meanwhile, an old cultivator of a village called in

all his sons to his presence and said that they have spent their time in playing and merrymaking. He continued that he has become old like the ripen leaves of a dry tree. Now or then he might pass away. So he wanted his sons to learn the technique of cultivation. Ordered by their father the sons took bullocks and ploughed the field. But the soil was too hard for the share to penetrate. So the old man took all his sons into a river basin and in its sand he started ploughing. The whole atmosphere was filled with an illusion of cultivating the filed in rainy season.

"Indra curiously came down to the river bank in the disguise of a Brahman. He saw the old man ploughing in the river sand with his sons. He asked the old man as to why he was ploughing the river basin like an insane. The old man replied Indra that he knew it was futile to plough there. But one should not forget his occupation. Everyone should make his descendants learn his parental occupation.

"Hearing it Indra returned leaving the old cultivator and thought that the old man had opened his eyes.

"One should train his sons about parental occupation, otherwise after him they would be nowhere. So Indra ordered his four sons (four clouds; according to folk belief) to learn how to pour rain on the earth. Needless to say the barren earth overflowed with rain water. Indra now realised how the old cultivator extracted rain from him by deception."

A similar narrative is found in the epic of Mahabharata entitled "Viswamitra Swapaka Samvad". The tale is that, once a terrible famine occurred on the earth. Sage Viswamitra, out of hunger sent all this disciples to search for food. They did not find food. Later on they

saw a dog was lying dead on the road side. They brought the dead body of the dog and being ordered by the sage, they all skinned it and cooked food. Viswamitra taking the cooked dogflesh, was about to offer it to the God like Indra, Surya, Vishnu and others. All the Gods requested the sage not to offer the food to make them profane, instead Indra assured rain on the earth and thus Viswamitra brought rain from Indra.

In the Gond story the old man is the counterpart of sage Viswamitra. The trickery played with Indra by the old man has more propriety than the means adopted by sage Viswamitra. In the folktale the old man had solved his problem in a positive way whereas in the Viswamitra Swapaka Samvad, sage Viswamitra had adopted a negative approach in solving the problem.

Now if we analyse the previous tale following the structural analysis method of Claude Levi-Strauss the essence of the tale will come out. In the tale there are some sentences with some similar functions and there are some other sentences as opposed to it. In order to find out the essence from the binary oppositions, the whole tale may be decomposed as follows :

	Col. I	Col. II	Col. III	Col. IV
1.	Indra did not allot rain on earth and hence the famine.			
2.	Cattle, plants and people started dying.			
3.				The oldman

wanted to train his son about parental occupation.

4. The oldman ploughed the barren field but failed.
5. The oldman taught his sons ploughing in the river.
6. The sons learnt it.
7. Indra came down to earth to watch the cultivations.
8. Indra wanted to train his sons how to pour rain.
9. Drought ended though rainfall.

If we read the sentences horizontally taking each

column separately, we would get some paradigms in it. The features of Col. I is real, devastation, failure to plough in barren land and occurrence of drought. Col. II shows the unreality and unnaturality of ploughing on the river basin. In Col. III unnaturality of ploughing on the river basin and the unreal Bramhan (Indra) has been shown. The desire to train ones own descendant with his ethnic occupation both by the old man and Indra as also, the heavy downpour of water and ending of drought in earth is the common feature of Col. IV. The continuous analogy are as follows :

Col. I	Real	Drought is to come
Col. II	Unreal	
Col. III	Unreal	
Col. IV	Real	Rain is to come.

This leads us to the following equation on the basis of continuous analogy.

I : II : III : IV (I is to II as III to IV) or discontinuous analogy : I : II : III (I is to II as IV is to III)

The same are as follows :

I II III IV

Now adapting Levi-strauss alzebraic formula we may examine the units to get the sum up.

Term	a - Indra, b - Oldman, the cultivator
Function	X - Non allotment of rain Y - Allotment of rain
Formula	Fx(a):Fy(b) :: Fx(b):Fa-I(y)

Here term 'b' is the old cultivator who is the mediator of both allotting and non allotting rain (Fx and Fy). In

Col. I term 'a' has function X which means non-allotment of rain, the feature of which is real. Term 'b' with function 'y' means allotment of rain by the old cultivator which is unreal. In Col. III the non-allotment of rain by the old cultivator is also unreal. In Col. IV term 'a' has been inverted. Here term 'a' has been motivated by the function-value of term 'b'. Thus in Col. IV term 'a' has been overshadowed by term 'b' the outcome of which is real. The sum up is :

"the real loss is tried to be compensated by the unreal means and ultimately the real is achieved." Or "if drought is to come than rain is to come."

If examined contextually it is not possible for a human being to think against his God or any supernatural power. So the old cultivator cleverly made Indra compelled to allot rain. The trickery played by the old cultivator is nothing but to overcome the real situation of drought through imagination. The sole motif of this tale is based on a theory that when a desire is not fulfilled in reality it is fulfilled in imagination in the form of folklore or dream. The imagination of such a story in the mental structure of a story-maker might have been evolved to keep an equilibrium of nature and culture.

IV

Drought picture in the folk songs of Kalahandi

The pitiable conditions of the drought stricken people of Kalahandi have been picturised in the folksongs. Some specimen are :

Sajani, Jadagachha tipi mala
Amari desare akalakala
Indra Gandhi saha hela
O companion, the top of the caster tree dried up

Drought appeared in the country
Indira Gandhi saved us.

The lack of rain due to drought has been compensated by using motor to irrigate the land. The song is as follows :

Sajani, Hatikana darapana
Marudi helana thakila pena
Motara paipa ghena
O companion, A mirror like elephant ear
Drought, arrived, the rain betrayed
Purchase motor pump.

In another song a visit of the former Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, to see the drought situation of Kalahandi in July 1985 has left an imprint on the folk people, who after his departure sang as follows :

Sajani, Desare Akalakala
Amara Rajiba Gandi ho sate
Jhaje Utrila, sate Sinapali tesan Kala ho
Nuati Jana.
O companion,
Drought occurred in this country
Our Rajiba Gandhi arrived in plane
Made his station Sinapali
O new moon, hear me.

The discontent of the people for the local leaders and gratitude for the Prime Minister is picturised in the song as follows :

Sajani Amara Neta thakila
Rajiba Gandhi ho sate bane bujhila
Sate Khaida pindhana dela ho nuati jana,
O companion, our leaders betrayed
Rajiba Gandhi understood well,

He gave us food and clothes,
O new moon hear me.

The people of Kalahandi have migrated from their homeland to Raipur (M.P.) Kashmir and Assam and other parts of India to earn their livelihood. They are paid less wages and exploited much. Even they have no right to return to their homeland unless their contractors permit. The migration due to drought is picturised in the folksong as follows :

Dalkhaire; Desare kala akala
Ghara duara chhadi bidese ghara
Dalkhaire peta kaje harabara.
O leaf eater, drought occurred in the country
Sent us abroad, beyond homeland,
Unrest for belly, O leaf eater.

Some proverbs of this region focus the imprint of drought reflected in the folkmind. Some specimen are as follows :

- Chhapan salar durbhikshya : A food hankering attitude is compared as a drought stricken of Chhapan sal (1899 A. D.)
- Judh bele pithir bhai, Akal bele duhagai. Literally meaning a brother in the battle and yielding cow in a drought is helpful.
- Garibar kaje akal, Mahajanar Kaje sukal. Drought is a problem for poor and furtune for a rich for exploitation.
- Akalar adhia, The food of drought that should not be wasted.

There is a folk ritual current in Kalahandi to face the drought situation. The rain God Bhima is woshipped through shamanistic process in tribal areas. If the crop situation is acute due to lack of rain, people perform the

marriage ceremony of God Bhima with Goddess Kandhen. They believe that by doing this they will get rain. Here it is seen that to solve the natural problem of drought the folk mind of this locality has imitated the Risyasringa-Jarata episode of Ramayana parochialising it in the form of Bhima and Kandhen. The solution of social problems is thus initiated through some supernatural process. It is evident from this folk ritual.

Notes :

Bandh : Mortgage of land and labour. Kalantaria : Mortgage of land for money with compound interest. Bandha-Saheji : Mortgage of land with share in paddy cultivated, by both money lender and motrgager. Katti : Mortgage of land for a fixed period of mortgage is over, the amount paid again. Goti : Free agricultural service to the village headman (Gauntia). 25 'Putti' of paddy (one Putti = 80 kg) Kalibhuti : Purchase of labour during harvest. Thika : Contract labour where the labourers may be in loss or gain. Bahabandha : mortgage of Land Labour by giving advances.

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The Kind Tiger and The Truthful Cow: Folk Discourse on Oral and Written Literature

June, 1993. It was an evening at Bhubaneswer. My children asked me to tell them a story. I was used to telling stories to my children. The age old grandmother, sitting beside the children, was listening to us. I started narrating "the Story of Old tiger and the golden bangle" from the sanskrit text which I had learnt from my school days.

The story is well known to everyone. It is about how the old tiger could not get a hunt and planned to give the golden bangle to anyone who would take a dip into the nearby pond. None but the greedy brahmin believed it and while taking a dip, the tiger ate him up.

No sooner was the story completed then the grandmother had told me, "Don't you know my boy, if, before entering the pond, the Brahmin had to made the tiger take a vow, the latter would not have eaten him up. I was a bit puzzled to hear this misrepresentation of a well structured sanskrit tale. I replied, "What was the necessity for the Brahmin to take a vow from the tiger ? Was it really necessary in the tale ? "Grandmother said, may he be a tiger or the Yamaraj (God of death) everyone is subordinate to the truth. Don't you know the story of "Baula" cow ? I said, "I don't know". Then she started telling me the story. My children were eager to listen to the stories. They were puzzled as if I have not properly narrated the story and therefore, she is correcting it.

And then the grandmother narrated the story of Baula cow, which is very heart touching. The story is as follows :

A Brahmin had a cow named "Baula". She used to go to the forest without a cowboy. One day, while coming back from the jungle she met a tiger. The tiger wanted to eat her up. Baula told the tiger that she had a three-day young calf. It must have been very hungry. She wanted to go back and feed it. But she promised that she would come back as soon as she had fed the calf. She promised thrice and the tiger let her go. Baula fed her calf and came back to the tiger as agreed upon. The calf was running after the cow. When the tiger saw Baula had returned followed by the case, he could not believe it. Out of pity he let the cow free.

Grandmother said, "If you obey the truth, the tiger would also give its way." Don't you know the epic story of Savitri and Satyaban ?"

I got a clue from Grandmother's reaction. The tiger is the main actor in both the tales. In the sanskrit story, the character of the tiger is real where as in the tale told by the Grandmother, the tiger has been portrayed as a kind hearted character which is not real. Usually it is natural to assume that the tiger is a cruel animal and it can not be regarded as kind hearted. So the tiger in "Baula" tale is unreal. The cruel stepmother is a common, but the kind step mother is uncommon.

Dan Ben Amos, while analysing the ethnic genre of African Folklore has rightly observed the social 'order' and 'disorder' current in the tradition. According to him, "the creation of 'order' is an attempt to conceptually duplicate reality verbally, to tell history, as it is, to narrate

experience as they really happened and to recount visions as they were actually seen. x x x x 'In contrast, narratives of 'disorder' are for all intent and purpose verbal creation that establish a world of a different reality, one that is unknown to an inexperienced by either speaker or listener." (Amos : 1978) It clearly indicated the two realm of the narrative, one representing the real, ordered and natural aspect of character, or event and other the unreal, disordered unnatural and imaginary aspect. But this disordered, unreal or imaginary aspect is not a creation without social recognition. Instead it is a collective imagination of social mind which accepts or rejects the character or event of a narrative. So this disorder is also equally important like the ordered narratives. "The creation of disorder", says Amos, "could be interpreted as a verbal creation of wishful reality, a desired state of affairs that does not exists." (Amos : 1978)

The narrative of disorder which is a wishful reality created by the group mind, reveals another realm of social reality to examine the narratives in terms 'order' and of 'disorder'. The basic questions are :

1. Why is there a 'disorder' in a universally accepted character, such as cruel tiger turning into a kind hearted tiger ? Why do people create this and accept this ?

2. Why do people alter/reject the 'ordered' literature at their level and create the narratives at their own ?

3. Why does there exist the differences between 'order' and 'disorder' ?

From these view points, it would be pertinent

understand the contemporary Indian literature, recurrent both in folk and written tradition. Folklore is the collective creation of people. It has its content, form, character, performance context and social function. It has meaning, communication and transformation. The purpose of oral narrative is, thus represents the mass mind, both of the creator and the listener. Literature, may it be oral or written has its individual, social and verbal importance. The verbal performance carries some meaning with purpose. The oral tradition not only represents the social realities but also attaches importance to the imaginary realities. So literature or a piece of art is the embodiment of reality and imagination. The narration of the narrator rests upon his age, place of performance and the audience he addresses. The oral expression of the narrator carries the individual creation embedded with the cultural components of the society. Even, the individual creation of a narrator becomes the representative expression of the society. If the narration is accepted by the audience, it is the success of the narrator. It means the audience/listeners determine the success of the narration. If they really appreciate the disordered content of a particular narrative, then it becomes true that they try to reveal themselves with the imaginary realities — or wishful reality which does not exists, but they like it and believe it to be true.

Reality in narration is 'order' and imaginary reality is 'disorder'. The best piece of literature is that which, through its similes, metaphors, symbols express the creation in a meaningful manner.

The piece of literature, may it be oral or written must be a part of imaginary reality. For instance, myth, legends, folktales, oral epics and epic performance are full of such imaginary realities in its expression with a

social reality deep-rooted in it.

In this context, the purpose of this discourse is to identify the folk oral tradition and to know how the 'social order' and 'disorder' is reflected in it. The basic question is why are a particular character or event which is socially accepted as 'ordered' found as 'disordered' in the literature. Why does this role reversal take place ? To examine this hypothesis, we can take some narratives (akhyana) which are common in Indian society.

a) fire and women in Indian society

b) Fire ordeal for women only. Why not for male ?

c) Status of youngest brother in society, role of eldest brother

d) Sacred place : the temple, the city or the jungle ?

e) Weak character versus the strong

1. Fire and women in Indian Society :

Indian mythology has innumerable motifs of the fire and its relation to women. The Goddesses, the Princes and the queens of ancient India have the narratives of taking birth from the sacred fire place. The Indian women takes a vow before the sacred fire to accept one husband (monogamy) during her life time. The story of self immolation in the funeral pyre of the deceased husband was another sacred work by the women. The symbol of taking birth from Agni-fire (e.g. Paravati), appearing in fire orderal (e.g. Sita) taking a daily bath on fire (e.g. Draupadi) are some of the specimen of the association of women with fire. This symbol represents the purity and

austerity of women, which not only glorify them, but also help their husband in promoting their lives.

Interestingly, besides the Ramayana, there are innumerable narratives where the heroine is to face a fire ordeal to prove her chastity. This was in the epics and mythology. Even in the history of Rajasthan, Padmini, the queen of Chitorgarh, sacrificed her life to rescue her chestity from the king All-ud-din Khilji. The heroic epic of West India depicts the mass immolation of Rajput women in fire to save themselves from muslim invaders. Women in India have a close link with the fire from her birth to death. The male dominated society has always curtailed the freedom of the women. The fidelity of women is examined through fire ordeal. Besides this, the authoity of the male have two reasons. One to keep the women chaste and secondly to have right on womens' property.

In India it is seen that the women are worshipped as Goddesses (like Durga, Laxmi, Saraswati, Parvati etc.). But in reality women are tortured, sexually abused, raped and murdered for bride price. Even the women have become the instrument in the bride-burning and dowry-burning. Should we say that worship of women as Goddessess is the social sanction or compensation for the women's torture in the society ? Is this not the wishful reality of the mass mind to compensate for the natural loss through cultural sanction ? Why fire ordeal for women only ? Why not for men ? Not only in the great epic Ramayana, but also in many oral epics and narratives, the heroines had to appear in the fire ordeal to prove her chestity. Here we can ask a question, are there any narratives where the male has to undergo the fire ordeal to prove his austerity. In the Ramayana, Sita had to appear

a fire ordeal to establish her chestity.

In the written text, there are a number of specimen of examining the chestity of women through fire ordeal. This is common as the writer were from male society representing the male dominated values over the women. There was no evidence of protest against this fire ordeal, instead it was validated by deifying the women who sacrificed their lives in fire. The worship of such 'satee' (choste) in the form of 'sati stone' is evident in Orissa, Rajasthan and Madhyapradesh. The ponds are also named after it as 'sati bandh'.

In the folk tradition of central India, an uncommon motif is found, which broke the written discourse and rejected the stereotypes of fire ordeal by women only. It is an oral epic named "Lakshman jati" which is sung by the singers of 'Baiga' Community. The uniqueness of this oral epic is that is a folk version of the Ramayana episode where Lakshman, the younger brother of Rama had to appear a fire ordeal instead of Sita. The story of the epic is as follows :

"While wandering, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were living in a Baiga village. Lakshman was used to play Kikri-fiddle every night. His wonderful skill in music and its sweetness attracted Indrakamini—a maiden of heaven. She offered her love to Lakshmana, who refused on the plea that he was a Brahmachari, for fourteen years and had not even touched the shadow of a women. Out of anger, Indrakamini took revenge on him, left her bangles and earnings. When Sita cleaned Lakshman's a room, she found the broken bangles and earrings and reported it to Rama. Rama called a village meeting where

each and every women were examined with the bangle and earring. Interestingly the earrings and bangles were fitted into Sita only. Rama suspected Lakshmana. So the latter had to appear two fire ordeal in the village. He came out safe and proved his fidelity. Everyone was happy with his test. But out of grief, Lakshman entered into the nether region—"Patala" (Elwin : 1935)

The narrative purports the "disordered" events and characters of the Ramayana in a tribal context. Why at all Lakshmana had to appear the fire ordeal ? Why did not Sita appear in it ? These are the two major questions which reveals the other realities of written epics in oral form. This leads us think as to why a male had to appear in the fire ordeal instead of a female ? What is the reason behind this wishful realities in a tribal expressive art ?

Besides the content side, if we look into the context of Baiga society and culture, the relevance of the narrative will be clearer.

The cultural context of this epic is a Baiga society. The Baigas are the subcastes of the Gonds. The epic song Lakshmanjati is preformed by the "Bards" of the Baigas accompanied by Kikri-fiddle. The Baiga bards have accepted Lakshman as their ideal character for which they have moulded Lakshman as a tribal bard, belonging to Baiga community. Lakshmana had not accepted Srupanakha, inspite of her request. Similarly in this epic story, Indrakamini was also rejected by Lakshmana. But when he was suspected by his elder brother Rama, how would he be free from it ? Here it may be kept in mind that the heroes of the Ramayana had no tradition of adopting a non-aryan women during their wanderings.

Even they were not thinking of having more than one wife. But this is just reversed in the Mahabharata. Bhima and Arjun had fell in love with the Naga, Rakshsa and Jakhya girls in course of their wanderings. They had not even hesitated to identify them as their wives. But in Ramayana, this is a sin. So Lakshmana had to appear in a fire ordeal.

Further, the flexible relationship of young brother with the elder brothers wife was common in tribal society. In order to glorify the younger brothers relationship with the elder brothers wife, this might have been imagined, But the most important motif in this narrative is that instead of Sita, Lakshmana had to appear the fire ordeal, which clearly indicates the male-female equality in tribal society. Instead it is evident that the women in tribal societies are more responsible and have ample freedom in their families and community. Therefore the male has been examined of his fidelity at first. Next comes the female. So the singers have reinterpreted the written text in their socio-cultural context. It also reveals how the folk singers moulds the written text.

Eldest brother and youngest brother:

In Indian social tradition it is found that the eldest brother always becomes the king and the youngest brother carries the chhatra—umbrella. So the relation of elder brother with that of the youngest is like an umbrella over the throne. Existence of umbrella is assured but it has no power. Similarly, the elder brother in a family possesses the utmost power in Indian society. In royal family the eldest brother was becoming the king after his father, not the youngest one. In south India, the

eldest son of a Nambudri Brahmin had the opportunity of being a priest. Youngest brother was deprived of this opportunity. There is little evidence of a youngest brother ascending the throne at the cost of his elder brother. Therefore in the Ramayana, Bharata the younger brother of Rama, did not ascend the throne even though he got the opportunity. Instead, he put the Paduka (foot wear) of Rama on the throne and ruled Ayodhya during Rama's exile for fourteen years. Perhaps, for this reason, Rama is an uncommon character who willingly left his kingdom for Bharata.

The social rules of Indian tradition, thus, left no place for younger brother, though it is true that in the absence of parents, it is the eldest brother who nourishes the youngers.

Therefore, the youngest brothers were not prominent in the Purana and Kavya tradition. In the Ramayana and the Mahabharata the younger brothers like Satrughna, Naukla and Sahadeva were not as glorious as Rama, Lakshmana, Arjuna and Bhima. The poets have also discriminated the characters. One can see why Rama and Laxman are worshipped and not Bharat or Shatrughna.

In Indian joint family system, the eldest brother is entitled to enjoy the land and property in a bigger scale, then the youngers. The younger brothers also don't fight against the elders as per the tradition. But the unequal distribution of land and power, creates a disparity in the mind of the younger brothers. In classical epics and puranas, we witness that the eldest brother enjoys enormous power. On the other hand, we come across many regional written epics, folktales, romances and oral epics where the hero is a younger brother. He enjoys a

number of supernatural powers, makes the impossibles possible, wins over the enemies, becomes successful in love and war. He leaves the house being neglected by elder brothers and their wives. Then he regains his lost power from his elder brothers. In some cases, the youngest brother kills the eldest brother.

The younger brother in narratives, tales and epics, comes out as a hero, where as in the Purana and Itihasa (myths and epics) the eldest brother is a hero. This is just the discourse or oral literature compared to the written literature.

In folk epics the eldest brother is a villian and cruel, where as the youngest brother is a hero.

Similarly in folktales and oral epics, the younger sister-in-law, younger sister, younger daughter is neglected and at last she regains her valour.

The importance of younger brother in folktales is a key motif across the world. In the story of "Search for the Golden bird" (type—550 of Stith Thompson) the king has promised to donate half of his kingdom who could bring the golden bird. Out of three brothers, none but the younger brother brought the golden bird and was awarded with the half of the kingdom by the king (Thompson : 1960).

The Gond and the Bhunjia tribe of western Orissa have a number of folktales with the youngest brother as hero. The precise form of such a tale is as follows :

There were an Bhunjia old man and his wife. They had two sons. Elder brother was hard working. He was taking care of his parents. The youngest was a lazy one. He never comes for work. One day the old man called in

his younger son and rebuked him. He said, "You are an ass". You should die. I don't want to see your face. Get out of my house." The younger son left his house. Before leaving his village, he wanted to meet his maternal uncle's daughter to whom he was to marry. He met her in the river and narrated everything. No sooner did he complete the story than he had turned into an ass. The girl felt very sorry for this and she left her village with the ass.

She entered a Kingdom. She found that all the women in that kingdom were issueless. The king of that country requested the girl to do something for the issueless woman. The girl worshipped a dry Sal tree. All of a sudden the tree blossomed with leaves and when the tree bore flowers all the barren women of the kingdom became pregnant. The youngest son—ass also got back its human form. The king out of gratitude gave them half of his kingdom.

This story reveals the reality of an youngest brother who became active with the help of his wife and regained his vigour.

Chittal Singh Chhatri :

A Gond oldman had seven sons. All except the youngest son were married. His name was Chital Singh. The first five brothers killed him in the field. But he got back his life due to Mahaprabu and left his house with a vow to take revenge of his elder brothers. He was empowered with the supernatural forces from the Goddess. He also got three friends who were equally capable of displaying their supernatural powers. These friends helped Chital Singh. Chittal married the daughter of a demoness. While coming back his wife was abducted

by a tantric yogi. He killed the tantric yogi. On the way back he faced a formidable foe with the king of Haldigundi. But he killed him. At last, while coming back to his home, he killed all his elder brothers except his immediate elder brother (sixth brother) who was favourable to him. He regained his land and power."

In the tribal society, the struggle for acquisition of power and land is acute where the elder brothers neglect the youngest in getting the equal share. Here the cruelty of elder brothers in killing their own brother for a small piece of land is narrated in the epic story.

So in reality, the youngest brother is neglected by the elder brothers and in the creative expression of the bard-story tellers, youngest brother gains the prominence of being a hero.

Power and knowledge : The King and the Sage

In reality it is accepted that the city is the centre of power. The ruler, and the capital city are the centre of power to rule the State. The villages and the jungle have no power. But this is not true. In turn, it is found that the people around the villages are really powerful. The sources of revenue and forest economy which strengthens the State finance is not the centre. So power is not restored in city. Power is given to the ruler. When it is violated, the people change the system. Power is shifted from one ruler to the other.

In Indian tradition, the sage (sanyasi) was more powerful then the king. In order to acquire power and knowledge people were entering the jungle and practising penance. They were attaining Siddhi in their thought and action. So they were preserving the subjects (living beings).

Even the powerful rulers have the blessings and moral advice from these sages to govern their State.

The "Abhiseka" of the new king—a ritual of ascending the throne was performed in the presence of the sages supported by the tribla chiefs, which symbolises the recognition of the king by the people, also the moral acceptance by the king.

Deviation of rule even by the king was considered unruly and this was again subject to criticism by the sages. In Purana and Itihasa the importance of sages—sanyasis are evident. Even in medieval era, Chhatrapati Sivaji was also a disciple a sage named Santh Ramdas.

Sacred place : the temple, the city or the jungle ?

The question of sacred and profane in Indian culture is significant. Usually it is understood that temple is sacred than other places. Human settlement has created a number of such biases as sacred and profane attaching social values and attitudes. Even those values and concepts are found in form of practices, rituals and rites. Temple is sacred place, but in tribal and folk tradition, even the temple is not pure. There are still more sacred place than the temple. That is jungle. Although it is a sacred centre, the purity of the temple is regenerated through certain rituals. In Orissa, the origin place of some Gods and Goddesses is considered eternal sacred place and temples are built in the city after the God. The origin of Gods and Goddesses is always in some caves, mountains and rivers which are far away from human settlement, considered the abode of eternal purity. Some priest / religious head discovers the Gods or Goddesses from the jungle and the king of the State installs the idols after building a temple.

With the changing of worship place from jungle to city, the change of priests/ worshippers, indicates the shift of power from the tribals to the non-tribals. Only in case of Duarsani-the tribals are worshipping till now. There is a shift of religious power from the Bhunjia tribe to the Gonds. This is shown in the table as follows :

Original form	Priest : Caste Status	Place (Jungle)	Installed form	Priest non-tribals	Place/ Temple City
1. Neela-madhab (Stone image)	Savara tribe	Neelagiri hills	Lord Jagannath Balabhadra Subhadra	Brahmin	Puri, Orissa
2. Manike-swari	Kshya-triya	Kashi pur Jugsaipatna	Manike-swari	Brahmin	Bhawani-patna
3. Rakat-maili	Kondh Tribe	Palmagarh (Jungle)	Raktam-bari	Brahmin	Khariar State
4. Duarsani	Bhunjia tribe	Guru-dangra	Duarsani	Gond (tribe)	Boden

Interestingly, in Kalahandi it is believed that the original power (sakti) of the Gods and Goddesses are in the origin place and not in the temple. So every year during "Dashara" festival the sakti is brought from the origin place through a ritual in symbolic form and then only it is believed that the Goddess of the temple is given new life (jibanyasa). Soon after the Dasahara ritual is over, after ten days, the shakti is again taken back to the origin place through a ritual.

This reveals that the existence of Gods and non-

existence of man in the jungle is pure and sacred where as the human relation with Gods in temple is less pure, even sometimes treated as profane by way of not keeping up the rules and practices to retain the purity. Hence, the regeneration of temple goddess getting sakti from the origin place validates the truth. The logic behind this practice is that it is the man who pollutes and purify the place and for purification the presence of divine power is inevitable. As the jungle is the abode of Gods and Goddesses it is considered sacred.

"Kandabora" is one such rite practised by the Bhunjia tribe of western Orissa, adjoining eastern Chattisgarh which symbolises the sacredness of the jungle. The Bhunjias believe that the sacred jungle purifies the impure human being. The rite is as follows :

The common practice among the Bhunjia community is that, if a girl attains her puberty in her father's house, before the "Kondabora", the girl is exiled to the jungle and tied up in a tree till her uncle or near relations rescue her. Kondabora is a symbolic ritual of the Bhunjias. The girl is married to an arrow before she attains her puberty. So it is a pre-puberty rite. But if a girl attains puberty before the Kondabora rite, she is considered sinful and this leads to the impurity of their house. Their God will also be impure if the girl attains puberty in the house.

The Bhujia community considers that the jungle has the supernatural power to set the girl free from all the impurity. The Bhujia community has priests but they do not have shamans. Instead of a shaman, they worship a living tree, which symbolises the purity of Gods and Goddesses animated in tree. A tree is sacred, not the man.

Man is impure. Therefore, the spirit of Gods and Goddesses do not stay for long. So long the mind and heart of the shaman is pure, God will speak in him.

In rural and tribal India, the jungle has been a center of attraction for knowledge and attainment of truth, vision and aesthetics. So the non-human are something related to spirit and nature, but the existence of the human is not free from pollution.

Weak Versus Strong

It is found in the folktales that all the strong characters are less intelligent and the weak are intelligent. The animal tales bear such motifs. In some tribal oral epics, the oppositions are evident. The strong ethnic group exercising power over the others are portrayed as inferior by the minor ethnic groups. So the smaller ethnic group have a strong sense of group solidarity to retain their ethnic identity and superiority. (Mishra : 1995) So the creation of such worldview and ideologies as parallel to the written discourse; the wishful realities of the creation of the people. Unless the discourse in the context of Indian folk tradition is discussed, the whole picture of Indian society and culture can not be transparent.. On the other hand the written discourse will represent the "ordered" society only. Hence the creation of "disordered" in folk tradition is only to counteract the forces which are dominant in society. Thus the folk discourse reveals another reality of Indian society, where the people's worldview in looking at the ordered society is different.



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Oral Epics in Kalahandi

Kalahandi is a rich treasure of traditional knowledge. Folklore in Kalahandi plays an important role in retaining and regenerating the traditional values and educate the people through its learning process. The folk songs, tales, legends, tribal myths and oral epics, proverbs, riddles, and folk performing arts are current among the different classes of people irrespective of their caste or tribe.

The literacy rate of the district is 34 percent. In fact about 95 percent people live in rural areas and out of them 30 percent belong to tribal communities. Major tribes like the Gonds, Kondhs, Sabars, Bhatars, Banjaras, Parajas, Bhunjias, Binjhals and Paharias are prominent in this district for their distinct ethnic culture. The Gaurs (milkmen), the Keutas (fishermen), the Kumbhars (potters), the Sundhies and the Kalars (liquor seller), the Lohars (black smith) are the major castes constituting the peasant society. All these tribes and castes have a common sharing of folklore. In addition to it, the tribal communities have their own folkore in their own languages.

Oral epic is a new area of study in folkloristics. Generally, the narrative poetry attributed to a story found in oral form performed by the professional singers and the ethnic bards accompanied by musical instruments nominated to a particular religious or social occasion is

an oral epic. In a high society, the bardic tradition was in existence. The Suta, Charana, Bhata and Magadha were the royal singers representing the glorious history and caste genealogist of Hindu kings in India.

The royal dynasties from Rajput lineage in Kalahandi were the Naga and the Chauhans. Prior to the Naga and Chauhan rule in ancient Kalahandi and Khariar kingdom respectively, the Gonds, the Kondhs and the Bhunjias were the tribal rulers exercising their administrative power as the ruler of this region. The glorious history of origin of the Naga and Chauhans are found in written form where as the tribal rulers had their own ethnic clan-bards to keep up their caste history and geneologies. For this, the caste-bard or clan-bard was patronised by their clan-master of their main castes/tribes.

As mentioned earlier, the occupation based castes in the villages and the tribal communities in forest have formed the agriculture society. The Kondh tribe in eastern Kalahandi and the Gonds in western Kalahandi were the real land owners, administrative heads and the religious heads till independence. The structure of village administration and religious function by the Gonds and the Kondhs are still continuing in the tribal villages of Kalahandi inspite of the modern panchayatiraj system is there. The village head-man was called Gauntia. The religious head was 'Jhankar' for the Gonds and the 'Jani' for the Kondhs, which is intact in the present religious practice of the village.

Besides all these, the Gonds and the Kondhs have their clan-bard or professional singers. The caste genealogies and the origin myth of these tribes including the local history recited by the caste-bards clearly indicates the predominance of the Gonds and the Kondhs as the traditional administrative head exercising their powers and functions over the society. Besides, these dominant

tribal rulers, other tribes and castes have also their caste or clan bards. Those who do not have caste bard, also have the specialists from the society to retain their ethnic history and legends through oral narratives.

The bards have their own clan masters whom they are believed to be originated. They have also sub-divided into various clans according to their own clan master. The bards earn their livelihood by singing epic songs, making handicraft and tattooing. Most of them are nomadic, wondering from own place to other at least for six to seven months in a year. They have their own land and house away from their clan master's house.

The epic singers of Kalahandi may broadly be categorised under the following heads.

1. Ethnic singer or professional caste-bard.
2. Castes and tribes having no bardic tradition but singing the epic song.
3. Priest group in tribal community—male and female priest.
4. Singers independent to castes and tribes.

1. Ethnic Singers or Professional Caste Bard :

In Kalahandi the following castes and tribes have ethnic bards as shown in the table.

TABLE - 1

Tribe	Sub-caste/ Bard	Musical instruments	Name of the epic songs/ caste genealogy
Gond and Bhatara	Parghania	Kikri (fiddle) bana	'Purja' caste geneology. Chitalsing Chhatri
Kondh	Marals	Dhundhunia	Janamkhena

	Boguas	(one string instrument)	Creation myth 'Bhimasidi' —Rain God Bhima Nangmati Rajphulia —epic narratives
Binjhal	Birthia	Mandal, Jhanj (cymbal)	'Jati Janam' —creation myth, origin of Binjhal festival of epic song. Bariha king of Borasambar.
Banjara	Bhat	Dhap	Meramma —creation of Goddesses, Lakha Banjara—culture Hero Mithu Bhukhia, Sewa Bhaya, Banjara god.
Gaurs (milkman, cultivators)	Ghogia Jachak	Brahmaveena (local harp)	kharatmal, Barakhena Bansgeet ("Bans" —wind instrument.)
Dom (Schedule caste)	Birthia	Muhuri, Tasa, Dhol	Jati janam — How they became a musician community. Madhab King Katha-geet, Salaban raja Katha-geet

II. Castes/Tribes without bardic tradition, but sing epic songs :

The majority castes like Mali, Teli, Keuts and Kumhars and the tribes like the Bhunjias, paharias (kamars) and Sabars have no caste-bard. But they have their origin myth and epic songs on their culture heroes and ancestors. The singers emerge out from the community itself. They can neither be compared to the caste-bard nor they are patronised by their community for their singing. Anyone who is keen to master the epic songs can be a singer in his own community. It is told that they had their epic singers or clan-bards, but in course of time, the bardic custom was abolished due to the heavy demand of the clan-bard.

Following castes/tribes have no caste-genealogists but singers among their community could retain their ethnic knowledge. The distribution of epic songs recited by the professional singers of the caste itself are mentioned in table - II.

TABLE - II

Caste	Tribe	Epic songs/culture Hero and Narration on Supreme Gods.
	Bhunjia	Origin of Bhunjia, Kachra Dhurua a culture Hero of the Bhunjias.
	Paharia	Bad Devtar Khena (Origin myth).
	(kamar)	Gandhu Paradhiya (Culture Hero).
	Sabar	Dance, the song of tatooing, romance epic of Oriya literature, sashisena, Jarasabar Viyapitha-lalita, origin of Lord Jagannatha
Teli	Bhat	Caste origin from Lord Siva and Parvati, Caste occupation, ritural song "marriage of Gods and Goddesses (Siva & Parvati)
Keut		Kaivarta Geeta – Origin of Kaivarta caste

(Fisher folk)	-	from Brahma and Vishnu, (associated with sage parasara, father of Vyasa)
Kumhar (Potter)	-	Origin myth, epic story of king Chandra-dhawja Kurala Purana by Poet Deena Krishna Das.
Mali	-	Origin myth, rituals.

III. Priests/Priestess Attached to caste and tribe :

In this category the Priests and Priestess of different castes and tribes perform the ritual and play the role of sacred singers. They retain the mythical epics of the origin of the Gods and the Goddesses and transmit it only to the persons who have been considered to be the priest nominated by the deities in dreams. The Priests also recite the local legends of the migration of deities or authority of one Gods and Goddesses over the other. Similarly the myths and legends of the ethnic heroes and heroines associated with the Gods and Goddesses are also sung the priests on different occasions. For instance, in Dasahara or Navanna, the mythical songs are narrated while ritual is instituted which is purely nominated to Gods and Goddesses. But during the worship of the ancestors, (the "Duma")—the Priest narrates the glorious deeds and heritage of the "Duma" which is exclusively for ancestor worship. The "Jhankar" and the "Dihari" are the Priest and the Shaman respectively in Gond Community. The Kondh priest and Shaman are called "jani" and "Dishari" respectively. While the Dihari or Dishari—the Shaman completely represent the Gods, Goddesses or Duma, the Priest mediates the supernatural with the human being. He communicates the conversation between spirit and the man. The first progenitor is mythologized where as the Duma of recent past are all ancestor spirits and culture heroes.

Contd. Table - III

The epic songs are considered sacred and have certain roles and functions to awake the caste/tribe with his glorious heritage. The status and functions of the Priests are in Table - III.

Tribe	Priest	Shaman	Myths & sacred Epics	Function
Gond	Jhankar	Dihari	Budharaja Lingadeo Jungadeo	Ancestor worship
Kondh	1.Govajani 2.Khutjani 3.Jogjani	Dishari	Janamkhena Puran Caste origin & settlement, Buffalo - sacrifice	Good harvest, ancestor worship, appeases the earth-mother
Kondh Bhunjia Parja	Gurumai Female Priest 'Ghogein'	Gurumai Female Shaman	Bhimasidi Bhimabiha (7 days ritual)	Marriage of rain God "Bhima" with Kondhen
Bhunjia	Jankar	Dihari	Origin of Goddess and origin of Bhunjia "Kachradhurua."	Annual ritual and ancestor worship

IV. There are some singer communities independent of any castes and tribes. They are known as Devgunia and Basudevia brahmins found in Kalahandi adjoining Gariabandh district of Chhatishgarh.

The Devgunias are the professional singer community depending on people for their livelihood. They move from door to door singing the glory of Goddess Laxmi, selling the paddy craft and get alms from the people. Especially in the month of Margasira (December to

January) they move around the villages. They are a local non-tribal caste.

The women folk purchase the images of Goddess Laxmi, Elephant, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra and Lord Gandesh made of paddy and they put them in worship place and worship them throughout the year. They also hear the epic mythology of Goddess Laxmi and offer alms to the Devgunias. Sometimes the villagers arrange the Purana performance programme especially in the month of Margasira. Besides, the Devgunias are the scribers in palm leaf manuscripts and are popular as Natguru—Drama Director in rural areas. They write drama on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata episodes and organise folk drama.

The Basudevia Brahmins are also a local caste. Their ethnic origin is not known, if they are of tribal origin.

However, their culture, customs, and status is no better than a local tribal Gond. Like the Parghania-bard of the Gonds, they use Kikri and they sing the Ramayana in local version.

The Geet Kudias (male singer) and the Geet Kudien (female singer) are the talented singers popular for their spontaneous recitation of songs in performance context, especially when a dance competition or song competitions between Dhangra and Dhangri—young boys and girls—are organised in a village. They also sing the epic songs, though they are not professional, but their creative minds have the storage of local legends, epic songs, riddles, songs and myths etc.

Besides, the village Harijans living with the tribal communities have a major stock of knowledge on the tribal language and culture on them—Details of the singers are as follows :

TABLE - IV

Professional Singers

Category	Singer	Epics	Musical Instruments	Function
Professional	Debgunia or Debguru (male)	Laxmi Purana Legendary Epics Folktales	Brahma-veena (a local harp)	1. Worship of Goddess Laxmi 2. Prepare paddy craft 3. Public Performance 4. Folk Drama Guru 5. Prepare palmleaf manuscript (notes) 6. Sing legendary epic on local heroes.
	Basudevia Brahmins (Male)	The Ramayana and the Mahabharat in local version	Kikri	1. Recite sacred epicsongs (a local narrateive, invoke mythical epics. 2. Sing ligendary epic stories 3.Folk tales on culture heroes (prose verse)
Occasional	Geet Kudia (Male)	Love song Folk tale		Dance, Song, Compose songs in performance Context,
	Geet Kudien (Female)	Love song Folk tale	Ramkathi	Compose song in performance context. Tell folk tales, invoke narrative songs.

The content

The epic songs in different performance context are of various kinds. These can broadly be divided in to sacred narratives and secular narratives.

Sacred Narratives :

The sacred narratives have a fixed place, time and certain rules of performance conducted by the priest for a certain religious and ritualistic purpose. In rites and rituals, fairs and festivals, during the invocation of Duma— the ancestral spirit, the Jani or Gurumai recite the song to glorify the heritage of the Gods, Goddesses and the ancestor spirits. These narrations are believed to be true. During the rituals or festivals, when the narratives are recited, the sacred narratives have the indications on the rules of performing the ritual systematically.

The contents of the sacred narratives are mainly based on the origin of the universe, origin of Earth and nature, evolution of animal and human being, procreation of mankind, struggle for survival, family and social bond, kinship, migration and settlement, ethnic occupation, origin of Gods and Goddesses of each ethnic group, clanwise distribution of land and jungle, distribution of Gods and Goddesses by the clans, history of fight against other tribes for land and jungle, settlement of villages, sharing of land with their supporter caste-group, dissemination of caste/tribe to other areas, invention of farming technology, invention of iron instruments, cultivation of paddy and pulses, village administration and religious organisation, friendship and hostility with other ethnic groups, worship to the Gods and Goddesses for their own victory and security etc. worship of the first progenitor, first priest and the first ancesters—(Duma)

are the major areas of descriptions.

The Parghanias—Gond bard recite the caste geneology "PURJA" is a long sacred narrative. The Gond priest 'Jhankar' recite the invocation song on chaturbhuj Budhadeo, Lingadeo and Janghadeo representing the ancient glory of the Gonds.

The Bogua and the Marals—two distinct ethnic bard of the Kondhs recite Janamkhena—creation of the Kondhs and Bhimasidi—the ladder of Bhima. Bhima is the rain god and culture hero of the Kondhs.

Similarly, the Birthia for Binjhal tribe and the Birthia for the Doms recite the Jati Janam and Purthi Janam during the Dasahara festival and the community rituals. The Kamars recite Baddevtar Khena as their creation myth.

The Ghogia for Gaur caste sing Barakhena Bansgeet representing their clan Gods and Goddesses. The narratives were recited during their post harvest festivals and during marriage ceremonies.

The Gurumai and the Ghogien in Gond, Kondh and Bhunjia community invoke "the Duma utra song"—which is the family history or caste geneologies of the respective tribes. Bhima Biha is another ritual found among these tribes performed where the scarcity of rain or the drought occurs in Kalahandi. People organise a marriage ceremony of the Rain God Bhima with a young girl of the tribe named Kondhen and the ritual marriage, it is believed, results in ample rain for their harvest.

The sacred narratives are thus known as Janam Khand Puran, Bad devtar Khena, Janam Khena, Jati Janam and Purthi Janam, Purja, Bhima sidi and Bhima biha etc. All these narrative poetry are commonly termed as Geet, Puran or Khena, Janam Khand and also Jati

Puran. In fisher folk (Keuta) community, it is called Geeta.

The content of the sacred narrative varies from tribe to tribe, depending on their socio-economic status. The Gonds have their Purja in which the history of the Raj Gonds is narrated. They were the land owner and administrative head. The Kondhs have already adopted cultivation as their major occupation. In their "Pod puja"—buffalo sacrifice festival the main Priest (Govajani) worship Dharnimata—Earth Mother Goddess Laxmi and Goddess Durga. He offers milk to Laxmi and sacrifice buffalo for Goddess Durga again influenced by Saptasati Chandi mythology.

In buffalo sacrifice ritual clearly reflects the origin, migration, settlement, transition from food gatherer to food producer technologies and ultimately the land owner and local administrator of their 'chak'—habitat. The Kamars—a minority tribes in their Baddevtar Khena—a long narrative song invoke their supreme God to help them in hunting and collecting forest products and pray for the virgin jungle without external attack by other community. It has been so as they still live on forest products and hunting.

The main functions of the sacred narratives are to ensure security of the community such as to get ample harvest, to gain all worldly objects, to keep the habitat free from diseases and external fear, to keep the jungle evergreen and to get food and rain for their sustenance. They appease their ancestor spirits and the supreme Gods for all these objects. They believe that if their ancestor spirits are not satisfied with their actions, they will curse them. So they promise to their Gods and ancestors that they are righteous and have not violated the morals and ethics inherited by their ancestors. Their possibility of

gaining the wordily objects as stated above are symbolically examined in the ritual performance and the success or failure is ensured and accordingly they establish their confidence with their past and regulate the present.

Secular epics or epics of culture heroes

The narrative songs which have the flexibility of performance in any audience irrespective of caste, sex and age may be termed as secular epics. These are though emerged out of the sacred narratives with a strong ethnic background, these are less religious and more legendary. It is called Akhyana—commonly termed as "Khena" or "Geet" or "Katha" in the society. These epic stories are believed to be true which represents their ethnic heroes of recent past attached to a place, and time and events.

The professional epic singers of aforesaid categories have a major stock of such Geet and Katha related to their culture heroes and legendary heroes with an ethno-historical background.

Each ethnic group has its own epic narrative on the basis of their cultural context. The Gond tribe of Kalahandi have the representative epic songs like Chittal Singh Chhatri, Lohagundi Raja, Kadel Kachhar Katha and kachra Dhurua Geet etc. As the Gonds of Kalahandi have a rich cultural heritage associated with the Gonds of Central India, they have a number of local heroic legends sung by the Praghanias.

The Boguas and the Marals are Kondh bards singing the narratives like Madhab King Katha, Nangmati Rajaphulia and Mara deo Raja Katha. Nangmati Rajaphulia is a tragic epic song recited by the Boguas in which the heroine had to commit suicide when she found that the hero she chosen as her husband was incidentally

no one except her own brother. Maradeo Raja Katha is the secularised form of the mythic song of the Kondhs. The Banjaras have their clan bard. They sing the epic songs Lakha Banjara, Sobhanaik Banjara which represents their ethnic occupation as well as the heroic actions of the Banjara culture heroes. The Kamars or the Paharias have a number of epic narratives. Gandhu Paradhiya, Koko Bhaini, Luhagundi Raja, Kamul surua raja are some of the popular epic songs representing their ethnic culture. Similarly the Binjhals have also epic song, like the Karma song and the narrative poetry form. The Bhunjias have their Allah Uddal and Khalnia Veer Katha depicting Bhunjia culture.

Each narrative is nominated to the main dramatic personae of the epic. The Gaur epic songs have been named according to the name of the hero and the heroine. There are twelve Khena or twelve episodes. Each episode represents the story of a hero and the heroine e.g.

i) Rupdhar – Hirandri Khena

ii) Sunadhar – Ramela Khena

iii) Kotrabina – Ramela Khena

iv) Hadukurria – Nilendri Khena etc.

The content of the secular epic songs depict the themes of love, war, victory, gaining or regaining of kingdom, supremacy over other tribes. The content and motifs of these epics have striking resemblance with that of the metrical romance of Europe. The epic story have imaginary elements with fantasy representing the demi Gods and Goddesses of the spiritual world of the traditional culture. Magic, witch craft and sorcery are the elements help the hero and the villians in becoming powerful men. The supernatural power helps the hero and the

heroine in wining the race. In ethnic based epics, innovations in agriculture and inventing equipments for the agricultural work, getting water (from Indra and the demigod Bhima (rain God) for the field, yielding a bumper harvest are some of the key motifs to be an ideal hero. The distinctive occupation and the custom of the tribes are chartered in their epics. In most of the heroic epics the hero is neglected by the elderly parents resulting his absentation. On the way he faces many obstacles and overcomes them with the supernatural help from the saints, friends, Gods and Goddesses. Frame—repetitions are recurrent in such epics and ultimately the hero wins the race punishing or killing the villians/ enemies. He is also rewarded with regaining his power, as well as marrying beautiful girls.

Visual epic or Drusy Kavya :

Interestingly, some of the local epic-story found among the tribes have been found in drama form, which clearly indicates the multi-generic form of folk epics. The Kondh-Paraja tribes and the Dom caste perform the epic—drama called "Desianat" which means regional drama. Desia is a link language in Kalahandi and Koraput district used by more than fiftyone tribes and other non-tribals. This epic story performed in drama form reminds us the Kavya—natya form and the Chhanda—natya form, as the dialogues in Desianat are in verse form composed by the local folk dramatist. Sometime, the professional singers compose such epic—drama.

While the sacred narratives have religious functions, the secular narratives have a socio-cultural functions. It is related to their legendary heroes of recent past vivid in their memory. Through the chronological arrangements

of various events of their culture heroes they try to relate their caste history and geneologies with some place and time. Thus the characters of these narratives are semi-true and semi-imaginary. It is found that even in the secular epic the replica of the mythic character of the great epics of the country are clearly discernable. However, the ethnic epics represents the racial memory and ethnic identity of the tribes, though they are secular in nature. It helps in promoting their group consciousness and ethnic solidarity.

Transmission of the oral epics :

The sacred narratives are transmitted from one generation to the other by professional priests/singers. The Parghanias recite "Purja" or caste genealogies of the Gonds which is considered secret and not transmitted to others except the family members i. e. to male persons only in the context of ritual performance. Similarly the Govajani – priest Singer of the Kondhs sing the "Govautra Geet" only in the ritual place of Goddess Dharnimata during buffalo sacrifice festival (Pod Puja). The recitation starts in the evening and it continues for the whole night till next morning. The new singers assist the Govajani and the learning of the narrative is achieved by rote memory. Similarly the Boguas and the Marals – the Kond bard also transmit their oral epic song to their family members only. The Clan bard, Priest and the Gurumai are restricted to recite the song without a ritual fixed for them. Some rituals take place once in every twelve years e.g. Pod Puja or Buffalo sacrifice of the Kondhs. In this case the Govajani fails to present the narrative in order and the elderly persons from the community help him in rearranging the events.

The epic songs nominated to culture heroes and legendary heroes (which are open to all) are sung by the singers. There is no fixed time and place for it, but most of the performance takes place at night.

Each main singer has three to four young singers accompanied by musical instruments. The junior singers use to master the narratives by repeating the mainline of the mainsinger which also help the audience to comprehend the narrative. The sacred epics are performed in this manner. But the heroic epic songs are recited by the singer without repetitions. But to remember the lines the singer use nonsense syllables till he gets it in his memory. Further his refrain helps him in taking a pause to jump from one event to the other. Whereas the method of transmission of sacred narratives is vertical with in the family and clan group, it is linear in respect of secular epics.

Epic composition:

Each ethnic group has its own epic cycle. It consists of two cycle, five cycles and twelve cycles. Each cycle is known as Khena, Khand, Katha or Geet. The local meaning of 'Khena' means the branch of a tree. Most possibly the nomenclature might have been derived from the Sanskrit word Akhyana. 'Khand' means a part of the whole purana or epic cycle. In sanskrit, epics like Koshala Khand, and Utkala Khanda are available. Similarly the Bhimasidi sung by the Priests and Gurumai are 1. Janamkhand Puran and 2. Nangar Khand Puran. In first part the birth of the hero and in second part his heroic deeds are described. 'Katha' 'Geet' means tales and songs. The epic song represents a tale performed in the narrative poetry form. So the Katha and Geet

attributed to the epic is justified.

The most important aspect of epic study is textualising the epic performance into epic from the mental text of the poet and its verbal expression, with the texture and the nature of composition. The singers are not literates, so their epic songs are always found in oral form. Hence their epic composition is based on their epic performance. The nature of composition varies from one performance to the other due to the performance context such as time, mood of the singer, audience's response. However, the content of the epics are revealed through some culture specific language and phrases which are highly proverbial in nature. It is found that the epic composition has some stock language and metaphorical phrases, which helps the traditional singer to express the texts in a given frame work. Therefore, the language of the epic text is different from the day to day spoken language of the same singer or audience. It has a literary and cultural flavour. However, the structure of the epic remains intact, it means without breaking the story they compose the epics.

In course of the performance it is found that the epic narratives are engrained with mulitgenres of folklore. They are proverbs, folk metaphors, images, similies, phrases, songs, lullabies, lamentation and so on to make the epics lively. The arrangements of episodes in the mental text of the singer are expressed through the poetic folk language and cultural symbols. Each episode in an oral epic or a myth is like a tree with various branches (Khena). The singer has to link up each branch with the other and arrange the episodes in such a manner that the events will have a logical sequence leading to the total epic text in a systematic order, so that the epic tree is complete with all the branches.

During epic performance, if the singer fails to correlate one episode with that of the other and distorts the text, the elderly persons from the audience guide him. They ask the singer that, "You must water the plants, in such a manner that it must saturate from the starting point to the ending point without breaking its flow. According to them the epic is like a tree and the singer is a gardener. He must know how to nourish the epic tree to make it green with leaves bearing the fragrance of flower resulting the fruits.

Most of the epics, caste geneologies are long narrative. Each epic take nights together to complete the total cycle. Even the Bhimasidi is recited for seven nights. Barakhena Bansgeet for twelve nights. It is learnt by the youngers by the process of rote memory while performing they repeat the mainline sung by the singer. This is the essence of the song. So it is called "Gova". Till the second time is uttered by the main singer, the youngers use to repeat the first line. The age old proverbs, sayings, and experience form the essence of the song which is related to customs, rituals and tradition.

Transition in epic narrative :

Due to the influence of puranic tradition the bards infuse the mythic characters and events identical to the ethnic epics. When the episodes or events or characters of Puranas are found similar to the ethnic hero of their traditional epics the particular episode is regenerated forming a new composition in the mental text of the bard. The assimilation of ethnic culture and puranic culture gives a new force to the epic singers as well as the ethnic group to extend their glorious heritage with the puranic tradition of India. For instance, the Debgunias claims their ancestry

from Devaguru Vrihaspati and the Basudevia Brahmins from the Brahmins of Gaya of Ramayana age. The parghanias are said to have their origin from Lord Shiva or Mahadev. The fisher folk (Keut) associate themselves with sage parasara and the Kumbhar (potter) community with the Pandavas after Draupadi Swayamvara etc. Through this process the local epic heroes have been characterised as the puranic epic hero and vice versa.

Gender Issue :

In all the epics, women has been portrayed as the supreme power. The sacred epics/myths/narratives and invocations are nominated to the Goddesses. Earth mother Goddess is the supreme Goddess of the tribal communities. In Baddevtar Khena and in Govantara myth, the Earth mother Goddess has been described as Goddess Durga, also Goddess Laxmi.

In heroic epics like Chittal Singh Chhatri and Nangmati Rajaphlia, role of women is not prominent in comparison to the males. However, the heroines have played a supporting and inspiring role in making the hero victorious.



Note :

Parghania	Gond bards in Madhya Pradesh and Maharastra are called Pradhans where as they are known as Parghania in Orissa. Each Gond clan had been assigned to a cluster of villages identified as Parghana. The clan bard assinged to the Gond

	clan in particular Parghana is Parghania. Each parghania consider his Kikri as his Vana–caste symbol.
Bogua & Maral	The Boguas and the Marals are Kondh bards. They are minority sub-tribe of the kondhs. Both of them play Dhundhunia—a one stringed musical instrument.
Gogia or Ghogia	Clan bard of the Kondhs/the Gond castes. They use Brahma Veena—a local harp.
Jachak	Those who have come to give something. Here the bards give ethnic knowledge to their main caste.
Birthia	The bards who sing the heroic songs, Bir means warrior, the man who sings the glory of the Birs are Birthia.
Govajani	Gova means essence and Jani means Kondh priest. The essence of the sacred myth is always recited by the Govajani. The co-singers of Govajani use Sadki—a wooden musical instrument with twinkling bell played in both the hands to keep the rhythm of the narrative.

Devgunia	A man who praises the valour of the Gods and Goddesses. Deva Guna means the valour of the Gods and Devgunia means the singer of it. They use Brahmaveena and especially dedicated for Goddess Laxmi. They show their ancestry from Devaguru Vrihaspati
Basudevia Brahmin	A minority nomadic caste found in Gariabandh district of Chhatishgarh adjacent to Kalahandi district of Orissa.

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Folk Epics of Western Orissa

Folk epic is known as one of the most important genres of the folk oral tradition. This genre is found mostly in the non-literate societies. "Folk epic songs", writes Felix J Oinas (1), "are narrative poems in formulaic and ornamental style dealing with the adventures of extraordinary people. They are traditional, that is, handed down by words of the lips as distinguished from literary epics, attributed to definite authors". (Oinas : 1972 : 107).

Folk epic is transmitted orally from generation to generation. The folk epic bears the heritage of a land and people of great importance. The hero of a particular culture is commonly adopted by all the castes as their own ethnic hero. In the folk epic the hero is not only the embodiment of super-human forces, but also endowed with supernatural and divine powers. Thus, there is little distinction between man and spirit in folk epics. Sometimes, in some epics God incarnates as the epic-hero.

The epic is found both in folk and elite traditions of India. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the classical epics of the Sastriya, which reflect the culture of this land from time immoral. Besides these, written epics have a parallel and independent existence of the Laukika epics which are current at the folk-level. The reciprocity of both the Sastriya and Laukika epics interacted with each other. Unlike the spoken language enriching the written language and vice-versa, the classical element has also influenced the folk-culture. Also the powerful folk element of the time have influenced the classical epics as well. The distribution of Indian mythology in both the urban and rural areas integrates the land with a bond of cultural uniformity. Not only this, if one

would start studying a particular aspect of local or regional culture, one would at last find the greater Indian culture interwoven in it. "The Indian Sub-continent", writes Srinivas, (2) "is in broad sense one culture area and over the centuries, ideas, institutions and artifacts have frequently moved from one part of the country to another, undergoing modification at every step. The study of a village or a small town or a caste provides a strategic point of entry for the study of Indian society and culture as a whole" (Srinivas : 1985 : 158).

Many races of this land, in order to keep their cultural identity alive, have associated themselves with the great epics of solar and lunar mythology i.e. the Ramayana and the mahabharata respectively. Beginning from the classical epics to the regional folk epics, if studied, each and every race of this country has tried to identify itself with the Indian mythology and dynasties. This is the desire to identify oneself to be one of the most important dynasties of the history and culture of the country or region. Even the castes and tribes of the most indigenous and autochthonous character of different regions and sub-regions have identified themselves to be a contemporaries of Rama and Krishna—the god incarnate. However, these might be fallacious. But the urge to be linked with the great Indian culture ties them with a cultural bond through the process of Sanskritization.

In the royal dynasties of India, the tradition of keeping genealogies and glorious heritage of one's own connected with the Hindu mythology is found in written form. Even in some places this tradition has been preserved through the caste-bard systems especially known as Babaduka (Bhat) or court poet. They were patronized by the kings as their royal clan bard. This tradition has been imitated by the tribal rulers of different regions

through the same process of Sanskritisation and it has diffused to each and every castes genealogies in the form of oral tradition from generation to generation. The bard-castes identify themselves to be the offshoot of their own patronizing caste. Like the bardic tradition of royal dynasties all the castes and communities have their own caste-bards. The troubadours in western Europe and the skomoroxi in Russian tradition are very similar to the Bhat of India. Like the Russian Byliny, English Bewulf and Finnish kalevala, the Bansgeet of western Orissa deserves to be identified as a folk epic. It may be compared with the regional folk epics of Indian region such as Syanwori of Manipur, Katha or Kathe of kannada and Telugu, Paddana and Gana in Tulu and Gujarati. (3) Claus : 1980 : 6-7).

The aim of this study is to identify the folk epic of western Orissa in general and a caste-epic named 'Bansgeet' (4) sung by the Gaur-bard Ghogia of the same region in particular. Besides the existence of bardic tradition in higher societies, in the folk level this tradition is in vogue. Almost all castes keeping caste genealogies and history through bardic customs is found in this region. Western Orissa is populated by the major tribes such as : Gonds, Kondhs, Binijhals, Banjaras, Mundas, Sabar and castes like Gour, Teli, Mali, Kumbhar, Bramhins, Paiks, Kulta, Kalar, Sundhi etc. The royal dynasties from Rajput lineage are Chauhans and Naga kings of Patna and kalahandi respectively. The Gonds, Binjhals, Kandhas and Bhunjias were the tribals exercising their administrative power as the rulers of this region.

In western Orissa the Gonds have a rich cultural heritage from the period of later medieval history of India. They have divided into eight clans (Saga), each clan has its own clan-bard. They are known as parghania in this region otherwise known as Pradhan in Madhya Pradhesh

and Patri in Andhra Pradhesh. The parghania of respective clan recite the origin myth of the Gonds along with the clan Gods and Goddesses. He also sings the glorious history of their clan heroes. Though the Gonds have divided into eight saga-clans, they believe in their common ancestry sharing the common mythology of their origin. The Paraghanias are identified to have originated from the Gonds, but practically their caste status is not superior to that of the Gonds. The Baiga tribes of Central India have their bard known as Bhima and Pradhan. The Banjara tribes of Western Orissa have migrated from the Central India for the promotion of their trade and commerce. They have a legendary eventful history of migration, which they use to sing. The song is known as Landan Lada or Khadu geet which bears the cultural heritage of their life from past to present. The picture of their social customs and traditions are depicted in these songs. The Gova-utara songs recited in the buffalo sacrifice rituals by the Kondhs known as Janam Khena Purana are the mythic songs which have influenced their caste epic. The epic songs of Rikhmun, Tulsivir, Kholagadia Raja, Khalinia bir of Bhunjia, the songs of Gandhu Paradhia, Kokobhaini, Marandi Potura, Udulia geet, Siraram rout, Dodok geet, of the paharias, are some of the specimen of long epic songs. Likewise, the other castes like Kalars, Telis, Kumbhars, Malis and Gaurs have their caste bards to keep their ethnic lore in oral tradition through their respective caste-bard. Besides all these, a caste named Devagunia is found in Western Orissa; professionally a singer of Hindu puranas (especially Bramhanda purana or Lamxi purana) associate the myth with some local traditions. All these epic songs characteristically are the history of caste songs, called geet (means song). In Chhatishgarh the folk epics are locally known as geet such as: Lorik geet, Chandeni geet,

Pandavasni geet, Bansgeet, etc.

Each geet is sung by the caste bard for more then five to six hours. The geets are constituent of five, seven and twelve cycles. It takes nights together to complete the epic cycles. The bards move from one master to another throughout the year. They are financially patronized by their clan masters. The bard may move to his master's house with his family and stay there for seven to eight days till the epic cycle is completed.

When a bard arrives at his masters house he is invited by the latter with a jug of water. The bana and chhatra, the symbols of their clan Gods and Goddesses, are worshipped by the clan headman and he receives the bard and provides proper arrangements of food and shelter. The expenses for the bard are borne by the whole community headed by the headman. In the evening, after the supper all the members of the clan irrespective of age and sex assemble in a common place to hear the glorious heritage of their culture heroes from the mouth of the bard. Everyone in the community believes that the geet sung by the bard is a real one. It had happened in the past and they are the present successors of their glorious culture heroes. Thus they all do believe in the supernatural powers of their ancestors and worship them as their mythic and culture heroes. By this, they show their group identity. These epic songs are also sung during the marriage ceremony so as to inspire the community by reciting the heroic deeds of their respective castes. These songs are regarded as auspicious and used during rites and riturals.

In this context a folk epic named Bansgeet of the Gaurs caste of Western Orissa has been taken here for case study. The Gaur people are agriculturists, besides tending domestic animals for their profession. They are milk-men. They identify themselves as Magadha Gaur

(those who migrated from magadha). Koslia Gaur (originated in South Kosala) and Laria Gaur (speaking estern Hindi dialect—Laria). The Magadha Gaur are known as Oriya Gaur. The matrimonial relationship among these three kinds of Gaurs is strictly prohibited as each of them feel superior to others. From among these, a majority of Magadha Gaurs are found in Western Orissa. They speak regional Oriya. This caste has a subcaste called Ghogia, the caste bard of Magadha Gaur. They sing a long heroic song named Bansgeet. A flute—like musical instrument, three feet long, with five holes in it, made of hollow bamboo, played by the Ghogia is called bans. The song followed by the bans is called Bansgeet.

Bansgeet comprises of twelve species or cycles. Locally it is known as Barakhena Bansgeet (literally twelve species of Bansgeet). Each species signifies the heroic deeds of Gour heroes. Thus in twelve species the superhuman and miraculous deeds of Gour heroes are described. These twelve species of Bansgeet depict the heroic deeds of the twelve brothers of Gour king Nagesvara and queen Urmila of Gaudesvara Kingdom. The twelve heroes, the sons of the said king are :

1. Bhujbal
2. Casibal
3. Durbal
4. Chaibal
5. Kharatmal
6. Sankharat
7. Badkharat
8. Mandbhadua
9. Rupadhar
10. Kotrabaina
11. Birbal
12. Sunadhar.

These twelve brothers are twelve princes; each one is the embodiment of some heroic and supernatural forces. Until now, the author has collected five cycle/species out of twelve. Each cycle has been arranged according to the heroes and heroines such as Rupadhar—Hirandri, Kotrabania—Ramela, Sundhar Nilandri etc. Each cycle

when sung takes not fewer than five to six hours. The collected material in its original form is not presented here for its long and elaborate version. So the story form of the content is given below. Like the Mangalacharana in Kavya Purana the worship of universal Gods and Goddesses, clan deities, Panchadeva and Saraswati are invoked by the singer. He prays to Goddess Saraswati to bless and enable him to sing the song with free tune. He also worships Ganesh, the Vighnaraja to start and finish the song without any obstacles. Next the village deities and clan deities are invoked. The village Goddesses are also worshipped.

The name of the present folk epic is Kotrabaina–Ramela, the hero and heroine. The story of this epic is as follows :

There was a milkman named Kotrabaina. He had a beautiful wife named Ramela. They had a six month old son. The capital of their region was Bendul. The king of that region was a womanizer, habituated to bring all the beautiful ladies of his palace to enjoy them. There was no body to fight against this injustice. Kotrabaina did not allow his wife to go to Bendul city to sell milk and curd under the apprehension that the king might take away his wife, if seen. One day, he had gone to his brother-in-law's house. Ramela, taking his absence as an opportunity went to the river, took her bath and returned home with a jug of water.

In her home she washed up her churning pot, poured the butter milk in it and putting the churning stick in the pot tied a rope on a pillar and started churning. But neither the stick nor the rope did move.

Ramela, being perplexed entreated her clan Gods and Goddesses promising to offer them sheep, cock and hen after returning from her business. In spite of all her

prayers, they did not release the churning stick and rope. Next she then ordered her husband's sister Balmati to call for an astrologer (Khadikar). The latter came. He was welcomed with a jug of water and some tobacco. Ramela brought a plateful of rice, put it before the astrologer and asked him as to why the churning stick and rope did not move. The astrologer started his calculation of planets on the ground for Ramela and said that the deities did not want her to go to Bendul city to sell curd and milk. So they have obstructed her from churning. But Ramela stubbornly wanted to go to Bendul. She thought of selling curd and purchasing gold and silver. After the departure of the astrologer Ramela took two pots of curd and a spoon. Giving her six month old child to Balmati, her husband's sister, she went to Bendul promising to return home before evening. She also requested her not to disclose it to her brother. In spite of Balmati's protest she went to Bendul city to sell curd.

While going to the city, her clan Gods and Goddesses obstructed her on the way. God Maha Lacchama became a tiger and sat on her way to Bendul. Ramela fearlessly moved her spoon and the tiger disappeared. Goddess Khamesvari in the form of a bear and Candi Samlai in the form of wild buffalo obstructed her way respectively. But she drove them all with her spoon and reached Bendul. She sold curd in exchange for rice and paddy. Meanwhile, two soldiers were passing through that way. They saw the beautiful lady busy selling curd. They came to the king and reported about her. Hearing this the king sent his soldiers to bring her. But the soldiers were defeated by the wonderful magic-spoon of Ramela. Hundreds of soldiers died in this battle and the river of blood flowed down across the city. Finally the king sent two soldiers, who by dint of their magical power tied her in serpent

noose (nagaphasa) and imprisoned her in the king's palace.

Kotrabaina, while sleeping in his brother-in-law's house at night, dreamt of a bad omen. Soon he got up and by morning he reached his home. He heard from his sister Balmati that Ramela had not returned from Bendul city. Kotrabaina was sure that Ramel must have been caught by the devil king of Bendul.

Next, he collected his bulls, cows, buffaloes and sheep numbering twelve lakhs. Among these a bull named Kurmel-sandh, a buffalo called patnia pod and a sheep named Ultia Gadra are remarkable. They led by twelve cowboys (Bara gothiali gaur) set out to Bendul city to fight with the devil king. The animals drank all the water of the city. The cowboys of Kotrabaina caught all the fishes from the ponds. A large stage was prepared on a tree fro Kotrabaina. He fell into such a sound sleep that his followers woke him up branding twelve ghanas (shafts) of red hot iron on his ears. After getting up he brushed his teeth with a huge trunk of tamarind tree and ate all the fishes fried by his followers, and left the fish bones like a mountain. Looking at his heroic and superhuman deeds the seven queens of the king of Bendul came near him and said that Ramela is imprisoned in the stone house. Kotrabaina ordered the bulls and buffaloes to break the stone house. Kurmel Sandh broke the four walls of the stone house butting by its head. A big battle was fought where all the soldiers of the king were killed by the butting of bulls, buffaloes and sheep. The animals broke the stone house and rescued Ramela. Kotrabaina defeated the king of Bendul and sacrificed him for his clan Gods and Goddesses. He also ordered his twelve cowboys to choose twelve beautiful girls from the king's palace. Thus by destroying Bendul city and killing their enemies they all returned to their village with Ramela.

In the village, the Gaur society scandalized her stay in the king's palace, and wanted that without testing her chastity, she should not be accepted by her husband. So a fire circle was arranged for Ramela. In the presence of the members of her clan she prayed to Dharmdeota (Sun God) and Dharnimata (mother Goddes) of earth along with her clan Gods and Goddess saying that if she had been unchaste in her body and soul during her imprisonment, she would be turned into ashes in the fire ordeal, lest she would come out harmless. In the best she came out of the fire unharmed and the society accepted her gladly. But Ramela gave another test spontaneously. She said that, if she is chaste, her six month old child would come to her crawling from its bed and suck milk from her breast. In this test also Ramela came out successful. The society praised Ramela as a woman of grandeur and Kotrbaina was allowed to accept her without hesitation."

This is the story of the folk epic Kotrabaina Ramela. The ethnic culture of the Gaur caste has been reflected in it. From this story we know that Gaurs are cowherds. The tending of animals and cultivation are the primal occupation of the peasant society. It is a community based profession. The peasant societies with their occupation of tending domestic animals with agricultural products were always in need of intense security of their property, life, women and community, as the society was mainly based on force-theory. They were always threatened by royal forces. In this background, where the theory of might is right was in vogue, the powerful men were exploiting the weaker communities subduing them by force. The exploitations and the enjoyment of the rural products by the urban people is the basic economic inequality in Indian society. Thus a social disparity has been continuing and still it is in existence in our society. Even in Bansgeet the kidnapping

of milk-cow by the royal forces from the Gour community is depicted. Likewise, kidnapping others property and women as in vogue in the primitive societies where the defeated was to withdraw or to submit himself to the winner. Thus the repressed feelings and the complexes of the Gaur community explode against the unrighteous monarchy and they finally save themselves from their identity crisis. In reality it may not be possible to vanquish the royal force, but in imagination to fulfil the cultural loss and to keep their group identity and unity, the Gaur community has fought the king and defeated him.

Now, if we decode the whole content into some functions and generalise them, it would seem that this story is nothing but the local version of Ramayana – parochialized. The episodes of the abduction of Sita and her fire ordeal has been followed in this epic. Here the parochialization of universal characters of the Ramayana in the setting of a caste culture has been made according to its adaptability. Furthermore it may be said that the functions of the content are constant with variable characters, in both the epics of Ramayana and Kotrabaina – Ramela. A comparative study will show how the greater Indian tradition has been deeply structured in the local folk epics :

Ramayana	Key	Kotrabaina-Ramela
1. Rama had warned Sita not ask for strange things in the jungle.	Interdiction of hero to heroine	1. Kotrabaina had refused Ramela to proceed to Bendul city.
2. Sita wanted the skin skom of	Desire of heroine (gold)	2. Ramela wanted to buy gold and silver by

golden deer.		selling curd.
3. Rama, running after golden deer remained absent from his hut.	Absence of hero	3. Hero remained absent as he went to brother-in-law's house.
4. Lakshmana watched over sita.	Watching of heroine	4. Balmati the hero's sister watched over Ramela.
5. Lakshmana obstructed Sita drawing three lines and asking her not to cross it.	Obstruction	5. The astrologer, Balmati and the clan gods obstructed Ramela's way to Bendul.
6. Sita crossed three lines	Violation	6. Ramela went to Bendul to sell curd.
7. Sita was abducted by Ravana and was put in captivity	Abduction of heroine by villiain.	7. Ramela was abducted the king of Bendul and was imprisoned.
8. Rama found Sita absent in the hut.	Hero finds heroine absent	8. Hero (Kotrabaina) found Ramela absent in the house.
9. Rama knew about Sita through Jatayu.	Hero informed about heroine	9. Hero knew about Ramela from clan Gods and his sister.
10. Rama planned to attack Lanka.	Strategy to regain the heroine	10. Hero planned to attack Bendul city.

11. Rama took the help of wild monkeys and bears.	Help of animals	11. Hero took the help of domestic animals, bull, cow and sheep.
12. Rama attacked Lanka.	Battle	12. Hero attacked Bendul.
13. The monkeys and bears destroyed Lanka.	Destruction by nonhuman characters	13. The bulls and buffaloes destroyed Bendul.
14. Rama killed Ravana and rescued Sita.	Destruction of enemy	14. Hero killed the king and rescued Ramela.
15. Sita was suspected by the people of Ayodhya.	Suspicion	15. Gour society suspected Ramela.
16. Sita was subjected to fire ordeal.	Test	16. Ramela was subjected to fire ordeal.
17. Sita went to Patala.	Noncommon	17. Ramela gave a test of her local tradition.

From the above comparison it is evident that the Ramayanic tradition has deeply been structured in the folk epic. Not only this; the regional cultural tradition distinct from great Indian tradition has also influenced the local tradition as well.

Binding of Rama and Lakshmana by serpent-noose has been imitated in the binding of Ramela by negaphasa. Kotrabaina has been characterized after Kumbhakarna. Their hero's sound sleep and branding of twelve shaft (ghana) of hot iron on his two ears to wake him up have been influenced by the Kumbhakarna episode of Ramayana. Influence of Oriya Mahabharata by Sarala

Das is also found in this folk epic. Flowing of blood river in the war of Kurukshetra and Duryodhana's swimming on it has been locally adopted in folk imagination. The local tradition of swimming small fishes on the blood river is noticeable. Similarly another mythology of sage Agastya's swallowing all the sea water taking it in his two palms to quench his thirst has influenced this epic. Drying of water of Bendul city by the animal forces is the influence of the above episode. Like the Bakasura of Sarala Mahabharata, Kotrabaina has brushed his teeth with a huge stump of tamarind tree. He has also swallowed all the fishes and left a mountain of fish-bone. All these descriptions reveal the influence of regional Mahabharata and the universal Hindu mythology by which the folk have associated their native imagination with their culture heroes according to their similar traits of assimilation.

Besides, the 'Indian tradition' and 'regional tradition' the picturization of 'local tradition' in the folk epic may be analysed as follows :

First of all, the Gaur community were a sect of cowherds, and next they have transformed into a peasant community. Now they are tending domestic animals and selling milk and curd.

One of the important religious beliefs of the Gaur community is their ancestor worship. A strong belief current among them is that, if they fall in some unforeseen danger, their ancestor spirts along with their clan Gods and Goddesses predict the danger through some omen, dream, etc. This is a universal belief. Even if someone tries to commit some misdeed knowingly or unknowingly, the clan Gods and Goddesses prevent them. They always remain unseen. But sometimes they appear in the form of man or animal to save them from dangers.

Bansgeet is sung to honour the glorious life and works of ancestors along with the worship of their clan Gods and Goddessess. The people of Gaur community believe that they would be put to some difficulties if they do not worship them properly. In most of the epic cycles of Bansgeet the characters and the events are mostly their clan Gods and Goddesses. In one epic, the clan God, being annoyed with the hero turns him insane for twelve years. The hero is put to many intricate difficulties by the Gods to test his devotion towards them. Only heroine and other characters of the folk epic have been guided by some supernatural powers. Sometimes they have been shown as superhuman beings with their miraculous deeds (5). (Claus : 1978-28 : 29) In the present folk epic Kotrabaina—Ramela, both the hero and the heroine have been picturized as superhuman beings. When Ramela started to make the curd on the churning pot, the churning stick and the rope did not move. The clan gods and goddesses obstructed the churning which was an inauspicious omen. They had known her intention of churning the curd. So they knew that taking the opportunity of her husband's absence, she was going to Bendul to sell milk and curd. They knew that she would be caught by the devil king in the city of Bendul. So on her way to Bendul they obstructed her three times taking the forms of tiger, wild buffalo and bear.

When Ramela was caught by the king's soldiers, the clan God informed of it to the hero in a dream. The hero after fighting a battle defeated the devil king and sacrificed him in front of his clan God. The propitiation of Gods and Goddesses with offering of human blood is the influence of the tribal Kandh ritual Meriah-human sacrifice.

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While studying the content, it is necessary to understand the local imagination and its appropriateness. "One reason for collecting context is that "writes Dundes (6), "only if such data is provided can any serious attempt be made to explaining why a particular text is used in a particular situation". The contextual study of content discovers the particular application of the subject. The local rites and rituals of the particular deities have influenced the folk epic and have been associated with its local myths and legends. A legend runs with a Goddess named Belarani (spoon-queen) who was born from the river Udanti. This Goddess is worshipped in the villages situated on the two sides of the river Udanti. Here runs a legend that, once the Satbaheni Jal Kamini (seven sisters of water fairy) dried the overflowing water of river Udanti throwing a magic spoon into it. In the place where the spoon dropped down, there emerged a water fountain which is known as Jharia (water fountain). The local people discovered this spoon and considering it the implement of water fairies, they worshipped it as Goddess Belarani. Thus the Goddess is symbolically represented in a spoon and is known as Belarani. Worship of Goddess represented on stones, weapons, and in some metal implements is the common phenomenon of the Indian religious system. Belarani is worshipped, animated in the spoon in the villages of Kapsi, Chatiaguda, Jogenpadar and nearby villages of the river Udanti. This spoon has wonderful magical power. The association of Gods and Goddesses in some occupational implements to increase prosperity of the community is a strong belief. In this folk epic Ramela used a spoon to defeat the soldiers. Through this she succeeded in overcoming the obstacles put her way by the clan Gods and Goddesses. The imagination of magical spoon is influence of the local deities worshipped in the

area from where this folk epic is collected. Ramela, being possessed with the spoon overcame all the difficulties. The clan Gods Goddesses are no superior to the tutelary deities of the locality. It is evident from the epic in which the tiger, bear and wild buffalo were subdued with the magical spoon.

The local customs of receiving a guest in a house is portrayed in this narrative. The guest is welcomed with a jug of water and then Kendu leaf with tobacco. It is the sign of cordiality. Another custom is that-in this locality people take a vow before the god that if the ambition is fulfilled they would sacrifice cocks, hens, sheep, etc. for him. These have been narrated in the epic.

Imitating the fire ordeal of Sita in Ramayana the Gour community has taken a test of Ramela where she came out successful. The second test is that of a tradition. Ramela said that if she was chaste during her imprisonment in Bendul then her six month old child would crawl down from its cot and suck milk from her breasts. In this test too she came out successful. The people were pleased with the chaste character of Ramela. The second test is a native imagination supported by the folk belief. In this locality it is found that, when the milkmaids of Gour community return from selling milk and curd and arrive at their house, they wash their foot and hands. Next they press their two breasts with their hands and discharge some milk on the earth. Then only they feed their children with their breast milk. By doing this they believe that the effects of evil eyes on their way would be warded off. This is only due to the fact that they do not use blouse on their body while going to sell milk. They never care to cover their breasts with clothes. To get rid of the effects of evil eyes of the king, Ramela gave this test. The child is sinless, holy like God. If Ramela would not have been

chaste then the child must not have received milk from her breast. So to demonstrate her chastity Ramela underwent the second test. Crawling of the child from the cot is a poetic exaggeration.

Number twelve is a master motif in central India. Wills (7) has rightly observed this number in the formation of social structure, administrative setup and also in the ideology and has remarked that this is an ideal model in the culture of central India. Sinha (8) has also observed this ideal model in the territorial administrative system of Central India (Sinha : 1962). Haimendorf (9) studying the Gonds of Andhra Pradesh, has found the same motif in their origin myth. In the division of clans and deities, number twelve has played a significant role. The imagination of Barabhai Bhima (twelve brothers of Bhima : rain Gods), twelve brothers of Binjhals and Kumhar, etc. are seen in this region. In Bansgeet the influence of number twelve has been found in some places. The twelve droves of cows, twelve beautiful girls, twelve cowboys, twelve ghanas of hot iron, etc., show the influence of the cultural trait of Central India.

The basic characteristics of the epic are the supernatural and miraculous events interwoven with the normal characters. The exaggerations and uncommon wit of the epic (10) transform an ordinary man into a glorious hero. So Kensley says, "One could like epis songs manipulated by bards to make heroes out of ordinary man" (Kinsley : 1987-97-98). In reality the bard assimilates the colour of imaginations and makes the epic heartrending. The present folk epic is nothing but the real life history

of Gour community.

The sense of group identity and ethnic superior attitude in the Gour community have created a hero and a heroine of super human power. In reality it may not be possible for the Gaur community of a village to defeat the royal forces. But the ideal victory in righteousness and defeat in sin has been put into the images of this epic characters and events. Finally it may be said that the suppressed desire of Gaur community has been compensated in this folk epic, where the ordinary village milkman has been able to take revenge against his enemy, the king of Bendul. By this they have kept their ethnic culture tied with the greater Indian culture, feeling one among all, keeping their group identity and cultural integrity intact.



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Ethnic Identity and Oral narratives : A case study on Kamar Tribe of Kalahandi adjoining Chhatishgarh

India constitutes a fascinating mosaic of diversities of various types, thereby earning an epithet of subcontinent. The huge landmass encompasses a vast and varied geographic expanse with a unique historical continuity, ethnic diversity, rich cultural processes as well as the mature civilizational framework. The Indian culture represent a massive bedrock of philosophical and epistemological foundations assimilating the best in the life and custom of the subcontinent. Here the vast majority of ethnic subcultures, cultural variations, religious multiplicity make the Indian society a conglomerate of co-existing diversities in a state of perpetual equilibrium with common central focus of cultural integration and universal appeal. Many castes and tribes maintain each other's cultural specificity and uniqueness through the complex grapevine of caste hierarchy/status either prescribed for the group or achieved through social processes excepting for a few characteristic cultural features, without which the basic identification of the group would be difficult. There is broad cultural consensus in the whole subcontinent. There has been significant assimilation between different groups such that co-existance and interactions at various levels have brought in a great deal of synthesis to give our society a multi-ethnic character and a plurality of approaches and world views.

But although the co-existing ethnic groups project a composite and universal Indian culture, they do not completely give up their ethnicity and cultural moorings. There are certain reasons and compulsions for maintaining their primitive ethnic identity. The economically dominant

groups have the ideological predominations upon the minor ethnic groups living with them. In such cases the arts and ideologies of the dominant group influence the culture of ethnic minority. As a result of which they completely assimilate to the dominant culture. In some cases, they feel insecure and their group identity is threatened. So they try to maintain their ethnic identity through retaining the cultural peculiarities of the group.

One ethnic group is different from the other in terms of objective cultural differences. "The member of an ethnic group", writes Sharp, "Spoke one language, held to a distinctive set of practices and showed a common system of beliefs. Because of these objective characteristics, it was argued, the members of the group showed common interest, and would naturally unite in order to propagate and defend their interest: (Sharp : 1988 : 79)

Ethnicity in Indian context should be viewed from the "Jati" system. Each and every Jati has its own occupation, language and a distinctive set of common practices with their cultural objective. Mallick is of opinion that, 'Jati' is mainly operative at the local and regional level and these Jati-Varna scheme of social stratification have been expounded, commented and interpreted in myths and folklore (Mallick : 1975 : 35)

Role of Folkore in Ethnic Identity:

Alan Dundes refers the term 'folk' to any group of people what so ever who share at least one common factor, sharing common occupation, language or religion having a distinct group identity (Dundes : 1978 : 7) So he says that "Folk groups are those of an ethnic, racial, religion or occupational character. (ibid, p-7)

Studying the role of folklore in retaining ethnic identity, Hoppal writes, "Folklore as creative communicative process articulates different forms of ethnic

symbolism, and being a fact of social reality, belongs to the mechanism of culture which reproduces the ethnic consciousness of identity of the given people. (Hoppal : 1981 : 6)

Jansen is of opinion that "Folkore not only acts as a unifying force in terms of one group's identity but also as a divisive force in terms of moulding or confirming attitude towards another". (1965 : 44)

Ethnic identity, now a days has a meaning which is keenly related to ethnic self consciousness. "Ethnic self consciousness" writes Broomley "means the awareness of their particular unity and distinguish themselves from other similar formalities. (1978 : 45)

Ethnic identity is thus maintained through the language, rituals, customs, food, dress, manner, speech, dance, music and such other aspects of culture of a particular ethnic group which would be distinguished from others. More specifically the oral tradition of each ethnic group bears the ethnic characteristics, through language symbol and cultural objectives.

In this context, the aim is to study the oral narratives of the kamar tribe of Kalahandi and to find out how their ethnic identity has been reflected in their folkore. The kamars are also known as 'Paharia'. They are an offshoot of the Gonds. But they claim to be autochthonous of Katpar—Purabadi hill range of Central India. (Russel and Hiralal : 1916 : 323)

The kamar tribe is found in the Western Kalahandi region of Orissa and in the eastern part of Raipur district of Chhatishgarh. They were the rulers of Bindra Nawagarh region (presently Gariabandh Tehsil of Raipur district in Chhatishgarh). They were also the village headman in some of the villages of Khariar state—presently identified as the Nawapara distict of Orissa.

The approximate population of the Kamars was 7000 in 1911 census and at present they are 19,750 in Madhya Pradesh (Srivastav : 1990 : 117) and about 5000 in Orissa. In Madhya Pradesh they are treated as scheduled tribes and get the privileges from their Government where as in Orissa they are not considered as Scheduled Tribes. The enumerators of Census have wrongly identified them as Kamar, another caste of 'iron melter'—blacksmith and have left them from the list of Scheduled Tribes.

The Kamars have their ecological concentration in Katpar—Purubadi hill range. They practice shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing and food gathering in the jungle. When there is lack of food or hunting animals they migrate frequently from one place to the other for a certain period and after that they return to their homeland. They never allow any outsider to take a hunting in their own jungle.

The Kamars speak a language of their own which is influenced by Halvi and Chhatishgarhi. They believe in the Gods and Goddesses of the Gonds. Most of their rituals, customs and religious beliefs are akin to the Gonds. (Hiralal & Russel : 1916 : 324)

The Kamar folklore is rich in its ethnic content. Though they are a tribal community small in number, their folkore, rites and rituals etc. shows their distinct ethnic purity.

The Gonds and the Konds are the major dominant groups in Kalahandi exercising controls over the land ownership, village administration and religious hierarchy. They have assimilated the components of caste Hindu culture. But the Kamars have a distinct ethnic identity. They are the isolated group maintaining their group solidarity.

The Kamars are endogamous family having the rigidity and clarity of group definitions. They are divided into two sects, viz; 'Budharajia' and 'Makadia'—The Makadias are monkey eaters, so they are looked down by the Budharajias. They form their associational clustering through their settlement of habitation or small village in isolation. It is seen that the Kamars do not settle with other castes/tribes and they form their own caste/clan based village.

The Kamars have no bardic tradition. Being asked of their bardic tradition they reply that long ago they had their ethnic bards. They were greedy and were ever dissatisfied with the alms given to them for their singing. So they abolished the system.

The kamar folklore is enriched with myths, legends, epics, tales, riddles and songs. Their oral narratives, both in prose and poetry form, have a rich depository of their ethnic cultural traditions. They sing the long narrative epics and myths nights together. All these narratives are enriched with their ethnic characteristics (Dube : 1947 : 7)

The oral narratives of the kamar tribes are known as 'geet', 'Khena' and 'Katha'. 'Geet' means the song, may it be as small as two lined song or as big as one thousand lined oral epic. They sing the oral epics which is known as 'Geet'.

The myths are known as 'Janamkhena' or 'Adipuran' which means creation myth. 'katha' means folktales and legends etc. Here some selected specimens of oral narratives of the Kamar folklore are presented for case study i.e. to find out the elements of ethnic identity.

They are as follows :

Narrative – 1 : Creation myth of kamar (myth)
Narrative – 2 : Kachra Dhurua—a Kamar hero (legendary epic)

Narrative – 3 : Origin myth of Goddess Duarsani (myth)
Narrative – 4 : An epic story of Kamar widow (epic)
Narrative – 5 : Gandhu Paradhiya (epic)

All these narrative are collected by the author in 1985 from the hilly region of Katpar–Purubadi hill range of Nawapara district in Orissa adjoining Chhatishgarh region .

Narrative–1 : Creation myth of the Kamar

In the beginning God created a man and a woman, in whom two children of opposite sex were born in their old age. 'Mahadeo', however, created a massive deluge over the world in order to destroy a Jackal who had offended him.

One day the old Kamar went for a hunting. While shooting an arrow to a deer, it said, dear hunter it will rain for seven days and there will be a great flood. It was a great surprise for him to hear this from a talking-deer. So the Kamar returned to his house and told it to his wife. They put up their children in a bamboo "Jhapi" – box providing food for twelve years. When the deluge struck everything went down the water excepting the bamboo box. A generation passed.

Mahadeo wanted to create man on the earth. So he made a bird out of the dirt of his body and sent the bird in search of a man in the deluge. The bird discovered the bamboo "Jhpi" and brought them to Mahadeo. Mahadeo asked them, "Who are you ?" The boy and the girl said "we are a pair of brother and sister". So Mahadeo separated them for twelve more years, and disfigured their faces with pox marks. Now they could not recognise each other and married. The Kamars are the children of this couple.

Narrative–2 : Kachra Dhurua : A Kamar Hero

A legend runs that there was a Kamar ruler in Bindra Nawagarh (presently Gariaband Tehsil in Raipur district of Chhatishgarh). He killed the Bhimraj bird of a foreigner from Delhi. The foreigner from Delhi sent man-eating soldiers who ate up all kamars except a pregnant woman. She took shelter in a Brahmin's house in Patna and gave birth to a child whose name was kachra Dhurua. Kachra Dhurua grew up to be a benevolent warrior and took revenge against the man-eating soldiers and regained his ancestoral throne of Bindra Nawagarh (Russel & Hiralal : 1916 : 324)

Narrative–3 : Origin myth of Goddess Duarsani

Once in the jungle of Guru donger a Kamar was digging the earth for roots. Meanwhile his spade struck on a stone in the earth and blood secreted from the stone. The stone was the resting place as well as the symbol of Goddess Duarsani. The Kamar saw the blood and being afraid of it returned home. At night, the Goddess gave a dream. She wanted the Kamar to be her priest as he has woke up the Goddess sleeping on the earth.

Next day, the Kamar brought the stone–the symbol of the Goddess and started worshipping. But he could not appease her with blood through offerings of animal sacrifice. So he transferred the priesthood to a Gond. The Gond appeased the goddess with ample sacrifice. Next the Gond transferred the priesthood to the Bhunjias–a small tribal group of the same area. The Bhujias are also considered as the offshoot of the Gonds.

Narrative–4 : An epic story of Kamar widow.

This is an epic sung by the Kamar tribes of Central India. The name of the epic is 'Maa randi poo tura' which is literally symbolise 'the story of an widowed mother and her orphan son'. The gist of the poetic narration

may be summarised as follows :

There was a poor widow in a village living with her son. The woman worked in the village headman's (Gauntia) house who was belonged to Gond tribes. The widow was working such as husking paddy, guarding agricultural fields and helping in household chores for which the earnings she received was so inadequate that she was unable to make both ends meet. It was very difficult to manage her basic sustenance. Very often the old woman had to engage herself in digging roots from the nearby jungle and ekked out a very precarious life.

One day she did not have any food to eat. She sighed and said "Oh mother Laxmi ! For how long would you put me in such difficulties ? Hearing the painful utterance of the poor woman, Mother Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth appeared in the shape of a young Kamar girl before the widow. Being asked by the widow Goddess Laxmi replied that she was an orphan girl and have come for shelter. The old woman took pity on her and gave her shelter. The son of the widow regarded Goddess Laxmi as his sister.

The widow gave Mother Laxmi a handful of rice for cooking food. It was cooked and surprisingly it was more than sufficient. Since then they had no food problem and they all lived happily.

One day Laxmi advised the son of the widow to cut the jungle and prepare the field for cultivation. The boy prepared the field and borrowed bullocks and plough from the Gond headman. But he was unable to collect the seeds. Laxmi took some straw in her hand, made it small pieces and advised the boy to sow it in the field. The villagers laughed at him and thought that the boy has gone mad. But surprisingly the harvest was so much so that it was quite difficult in their part to bring all the paddy to their house. Laxmi told the old woman to go

to the village headman and get six 'Kodi' of cart (one 'kodi' is equal to twenty) to lift the paddy from the field to pay the rent for the transportation to him. Being asked of the rent, the village headman (Gauntia) thought that yesterday she was working in his house as a daily wagers and now she needs six Kodi of carts to lift her harvest. However, he agreed to provide the carts being assured by the widow to get the admissible wages. The Gauntia reluctantly provided her with six Kodi carts. The paddy was transported from the field to the widow's house. But there was no place in her small hut to keep all the paddy. It was kept outside her hut.

The cartmen sent by the Gauntia demanded the wages for the cart. Laxmi immediately plucked a pumkin from the roof of her hut and gave it to the cartmen to hand it over to the Gauntia. When the Gauntia saw the pumpkin he put his hands on his forehead and said, "see, how the wicked Kamar widow cheated me with mere a pumpkin for six kodi carts". He gave the pumpkin to his wife to prepare curry. While cutting the pumpkin the Gauntia's wife found a huge number of gold coins within it. Gauntia knew this from his wife and asked his cartmen, how many more pumpkins did you see on the widow's roof ? The cartmen said, 'innumerable'—Gauntia became spellbound. He thought that there was no other rich man like him in his locality. Perhaps, now Goddess Laxmi had taken shelter in the old women's house.

The Gauntia improvised a game plan. He wanted to give his daughter in marriage with the son of the old widow so that through her daughter he could get control over the old woman's property.

He presented this proposal to the old widow. She gladly agreed and the marriage of the Kamar widow's son with the only daughter of the headman was

solemnised.

Next, the headman wanted to get Laxmi—the adopted daughter of the Kamar widow—as his daughter-in-law. He said to the old woman, 'O Samdhin ! I gave my daughter in marriage to your son. Now I want my son to be married to your daughter.' The old woman, unwittingly agreed to this proposal. The marriage was almost fixed up.

Goddess Laxmi could understand the plan. She said to the old woman "Mother, do you think that I am a human being ? I took pity on you. You called me and I came to you hearing your pitiable condition. I helped you in all respect. Now how do you think of my marriage with a human being ? You believed in the Gauntia who was not even giving you your rightful daily wages. I considered you as my own mother. I filled in your house with plenty. Now I am going". Saying this Goddess Laxmi disappeared.

When the Gauntia heard it he felt as if he had terribly been cheated by the Kamar widow.

Narrative—5 : Gandhu Paradhiya

This narrative is named as per the name of the hero "Gandhu Paradhiya". Gandhu is the name of the hero and Paradhiya symbolised a hunter. The gist of the epic is as follows :

Gandhu Paradhiya was a hunter. He killed a deer. By this time the Gond prince and his followers of Bindra Nawagarh kingdom arrived at the spot and claimed that they have killed the deer. So there was a fight with Gandhu and they took away the skin of the deer. Gandhu tried to take revenge of this defeat. He made a beautiful bamboo handicraft and presented it to the king of Subarnapur. The king gladly accepted the gift and in turn gave him

some gold coins and expressed his inability to help him in his objectives. Gandhu returned with the gold coins.

Next he went to the king of Manikgarh—who was a Bhunjia king. He present the gold coins to the king and sought help from him to fight against the king of Bindra Nawagarh. This plea was that the prince of Bindra Nawagarh had forcibly taken away the skin of the deer from his own territory. The king of Manikgarh expressed his inability to help him in his expedition and gave him some pearls—Manikya. Then Gandhu went to the Binjhal king of Padampur. The king employed 'Kokobhaini'—a tribal hero of superhuman ability to help Gandhu in his fight against the prince of Bindra Nawagarh. A great battle was fought between Kokobhaini—the tribal warrior with the prince of Bindra Nawagarh and the later was defeated. The deer skin which was brought forcibly by Kokobhaini was demanded by Gandhu to be returned to him. But Kokobhaini refused to oblige. So another combat took place between Gandhu and Kokobhaini. Ultimately Kokobhaini defeated Gandhu. The latter, out of grief went into the jungle. Since then he never went to Padampur region. Till today the Kamar has no kingdom.

Analysis

Studying on the role of folkore in maintaining ethnic identity, Hoppal writes, "Folklore as creative communicative process articulates different forms of ethnic symbolism and being a fact of social reality, belongs to the mechanism of culture which reproduces the ethnic consciousness of identity of the given people." (Hoppal : 1993 : 7) Broomley also is of opinion that, ethnic self-consciousness means the awareness of their particular unity and distinguish themselves from other similar formations (1978 : 45).

Jansen, studying the role of folklore in retaining group identity, is of opinion that, "Folklore not only acts as a uniting force in terms of one's group's identity but also as a divisive force in terms of moulding and confirming attitude of one group towards another group." (1965 : 44). He further says, "the smaller the group, the stronger the esoteric elements in its folklore and vice versa." Many groups are definable simply because they each have their own peculiar types of isolation ranging from obvious geographic separation to other not so-obvious forms of isolation. (ibid)

In all the oral narratives presented in this paper we could find out two distinct aspects viz., (A) ethnic culture of Kamars, preserving their group identity. (B) cultural assimilation/diffusion with the larger traditions of India.

A) Ethnic culture of the Kamars to retain their group identity is based on some factors which could be found from their socio-cultural processes. The question is that why the Kamars prefer to retain their group identity ? Why do they like to live in isolation ? On the basis of their folk narratives these questions may be examined. As described in narrative–2 the Gonds constitute powerful tribes to overthrow the Kamars from Bindra Nawagarh state. This was originally the ancestral seat of the kamars. The ethnographic account of Russel and Hiralal also mentions that the Kamars are the off-shoot of the Gonds. (1916 : 324) But the Kamar myth (Narrative–2) mentions that they are the direct descendants of their Supreme God Mahadeo. In this myth they describe that their first progenitors were a Kamar couple, consisting of a pair of uterine children from the same parantage. Thus, the myth shows their racial purity, which rejects the concept of their being the off-shoot of

the Gonds. When the Gonds have occupied their territory the hostility of the Gonds and Kamars might have been much more acute. So to project their separate identities such myths could have been created to alienate the Kamars from the Gonds.

In Narrative—3, it is seen that the Kamars were the first discoverer of Goddess 'Duarsani' now the tutelary deity of the Gonds as well as the other belonging tribes. Goddess Duarsani was worshipped by the Kamar priest who was replaced by a Gond priest. This story validates the empowerment of the Gonds over the Kamars in the process of control over the state, transfer of the power base and the religious priesthood. It is found in western Kalahandi that the Gonds were the administrative heads "Gauntia and Makaddam". They are also religious head achieving priestly status. This symbolises the transfer of political power from the kamars to the Gonds. So the truth of over-lordship of a peasant society—the Gonds over the primitive tribe—the Kamars, is established through a power shift. It is a great loss on the part of the Kamars. The loss of the land and Goddess have continued to be blackspots in the racial memory which could have been projected in their folklore. In narrative—5 empowerment over the deer skin symbolises the intervention of the Gonds upon the territory of the Kamars more specifically validates the above truth. Even to compensate for the degradation of their socio-political status they have projected them as superior to the Gonds. It is evident from their folk narratives.

Ethnocentric "Kamar" :

In reality, it is even unimaginable in the part of a Kamar boy to marry a Gond girl of Gauntia—the village headman. But in the epic of the Kamar widow (Narrative—4) it happened so. The Kamar boy married the Gauntia's

daughter and in turn the Gond's son could not marry the daughter of the kamar widow.

This again indicates a sense of ethnocentrism of the Kamar community. In reality they do not have an equal caste status with that of the Gonds. Rather the Kamars are considered as an offshoot of the Gonds. In the narrative—4, the Kamars have perceived marriage between a Gond girl with a kamar boy. In this narrative the concept of ethnic purity of the Kamars is exhibited by refusal of marriage of a Gond boy with Laxmi is depicted. A Gond girl given in marriage to a Kamar boy denotes a superior caste status for the Kamars. Till today there is no evidence of a Kamar girl divorced by a Kamar husband nor any Kamar girl eloped with any out caste lovers. This suggests maintenance of ethnic purity of the Kamars through the institution of marriage within the same community.

In the creation myth of Kamar (Narrative—1) Mahadeo, the Supreme God wanted to bring a deluge on the earth simply to drown the jackal, who offended him. Again in the epic narrative—5 Gandhu Paradhiya had fought for a deer skin which reveals the impulsive character of tribal people who are more likely to be guided by the race memory of their ethnic impulses rather than a sense of rationality.

Here, an event may be mentioned. A certain kind of grass—"De badhun" is not cut off from the jungle unless the brightmoon of Bhadrava comes. Some Gond and Dom people entered the forest and cut off the grass. They were obstructed by a Kamar. He told that if they took away the "De badhun" the forest Goddess would be angry and their entire community would be in trouble. But when the outsiders did not bother to listen to him and cut off the grass the Kamar killed one of them shooting

an arrow in his bow. Two others saved themselves and ran away. The police arrested the Kamar and he replied in the court that as they had disregarded their religious tradition by cutting off the grass he had to protest. He confessed his role in the homicide without any hesitation and did not consider his action as sinful. Rather he was happy that he had done his duties to preserve the tradition. This depicts the distinct ethnic character of the Kamars.

Sense of Isolation and withdrawal

In narrative—5 we see that Gandhu Paradhiya was betrayed by the tribal warrior 'Kokobhaini' who defeated the Gond King of Bindra Nawagarh on behalf of Gandhu and got back the deer skin but he did not return it to Gandhu. It symbolizes introduction of another tribal power to his territory. Out of anguish and sense of diffidence he ran into the jungle as a mark of self withdrawal. A sense of insecurity alongwith a challenge to his self esteem as well as his self identity, takes over his mental process. He started a new settlement, where he expected not to face any outside intervention. Till today it has been observed that the Kamar tribe does not allow people from other caste/tribe in their exclusive settlements. They always build their habitat only at the feet of some hill adjacent to a jungle and like to live in isolation. Even their language, customs, traditions and rituals are entirely different from other communities. In narrative—3 we see that their sense of withdrawal is much more intense when Goddess Duarsani is also appropriated by the Gonds and handed over to the Bhunjias. But at first instance, the Kamars were the traditional believers of the Goddess and the priest, first worshipper is always from the Kamar community.

The Gonds belong to the peasant society. They share the agro-economic activities with other non-tribal group

and thus have been assimilated into the greater Indian tradition. As plain-dwellers and agriculturists they have adopted the changes through their participation in education, politics and culture etc. But the Kamars have defined a particular territory for adopted agriculture as the dominant form of economic activity. They are not even aware of their exclusive habitat in the forests is being enchroached upon and gradually destroyed by outsiders, thereby depriving them of their forest dependant livelihood. They do not desire to come down to the plain land, thus trying to maintain their group solidarity and isolated life style of living.

Esoteric Elements in Kamar Folkore :

No other ethnic group knows about the esoteric elements inherent in Kamar folklore. The ethnocentric character of the Kamars, the ethnic stereo type of Kamars in relation to the Gonds and their indifferent attitude towards other communities are not visible in the present Kamar life style. But when the traditions of their folklore are carefully studied and analysed, the esoteric components would be revealed. Smilarly their folklore has given them a sense of unity and integrity in their in-group building and ethnic mobilisation.

Cultural Diffusion

In the oral narratives of the Kamar we may see certain motifs which denotes the age old cultural interaction between tribal and non-tribal groups in Central India. The following motifs are found in the Kamar narratives.

Narrative—1 : Creation myth :

i) Mahadeo—Siva as Supreme God
ii) Concept of deluge and creation of earth, bird and animal by Mahadeo

iii) Floating of a box in deluge and the first brother sister in the box
iv) Brother—Sister incest
v) Talking deer warning a deluge on the earth
vi) Creation of man from the union of brother and sister

Narrative—2 : A Kamar Hero :

i) A pregnant Kamar woman taking shelter in a Brahmin's house in Patna Kingdom
ii) The kamar hero taking revenge on his fater's enemy and regain his fater's Kingdom

The motifs of creation myth found in the kamar creation myth have striking resemblance with the Hindu mythology Srimad Bhagabata.

Studying the tribal myths of Central India, Blackburn is of opinion that these myths are by no means free from Sanskrit influence. (Blackburn : 1977 : 200) The motif of talking deer in Kamar myth is influenced by the Hindu mythology Srimad Bhagabata. In this text a small talking fish warned the king Satyabrata of the future deluge on the earth. The king was identified later on, Manu. (Srimad Bhagabata, VIII the skandha : 24 Adhaya). As the context of tribal myth is a jungle deer, the Kamar had witnessed a talking deer. This shows the cultural diffusion of Hindu mythology in a Tribal setting in central India.

The narrative of a Kamar hero Kachra Dhurua is also influenced by the Chauhan Origin myth. A pregnant Kamar woman taking shelter in a Brahmin's house in Patna State resembles with the origin myth of the Chauhan's of Western Orissa. (Ramsey : 1901 : 81-303). Similar myths are also found among other tribal communities of Central India (Mishra : 1993 : 20).

It shows that an Indian aboriginal community

confined to a particular geographical environment has similarities in the mythological beliefs and concepts with those of the greater Sanskritic tradition of India.



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Patalaganga: A Sacred Centre of Tribe non-tribal Interaction

India has a rich cultural heritage. Inspite of all the diversities in respect of geographical areas, customs, traditions, languages, religion, castes and communities etc., it has a cultural unity. The base of Indian culture is found locally coloured with popular folk elements. Varieties of people with varieties of languages with their own cultural identity do exist here which is the basic characteristics of greater Indian culture.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata play a vital role in integrating Indian unity. The popular folk elements of this country has been reflected in these two epics. The epic characters and events have been associated with local imaginations through which the remote parts of India, maintain their identity with the mainstream of Indian culture. Swami Pavitranand rightly observes that "there are thousands of places which are considered sacred by the people all over India without distinction of caste or creed. It would indeed be difficult to trace the cause of the importance of many holy places round which have grown innumerable legends and traditions with the passing of ages. But this may be said as a general rule, that every place now considered holy has had something associated with it, which was likely to have served as an incentive to religious falling." (Pavitranand : 1969 : 469)

Here, an attempt has been made to show, how in a remote tribal area, a sacred centre for cultural transmission of higher religion has emerged through a legend associated with Rama. Before the emergence of this sacred centre, the area was completely inaccessible

to the outsiders. The tribals like Gond. Bhunjia, paharia, Bhatra, etc. were the indigenous inhabitants of this region under study till the first part of nineteenth century.

Location of the place : This place is known as 'Patalganga'. It is situated in the katpar-Purubadi mountain range of Nawapara sub-division in the district of Kalahandi. This place is located in the dense forest, middle of Katpar and Gurudongar mountain in Boden Block. It is an important place for its scenic beauty as well as a sacred centre. It is one hundred and five Km. away from the district head quarter, Nuapada.

Patalganga : patalganga is a natural fountain. The then king of khariar had built a pool on the fountain. The structure of the emerging point of the fountain is 6' bredth 15' length and 8' deep. The water is clean, transparent; iron smelling. Bathing arrangements have been made around the fountain. There is an age old banian tree under which a sivalinga is worshipped. Beside the Sivalinga, there are two pairs of footprints engraved on the stones. People say these are the foot prints of Lord Rama and Sita. An arrow in the bottom of the banyan tree is worshipped. This arrow is considered as the arrow of Laksmana by which, it is said, he brought water from patala (under-world). On the western part of the place there is a Jagannath temple build up by padman Singh, the Chauhan king of Khariar, in 1872. The middle place in between the fountain and the Jagannath temple is a wide open ground. In the South there is a Pandal (Mandap) for the sages. Here, festivals like Rathayatra, Kartika Purnima, Pousa Purnima, Magha Purnima, Makara Sankranti, Chandana yatra. Visuva mela, Lunar and Solar eclips, Baisakha purnimà etc. are celebrated. Pilgrims mainly from south-western Orissa

and estern Madhya Pradesh come here on these occasions to take a holy dip. They believe that a dip in Patalaganga is as sacred as that of a dip in Ganga. A bramhin worships Lord jagannath and Lord Siva.

Dwarsani : Adjacent to the north of Patalaganga, a tribal village named 'Kot Gaon'. inhabited by Bhunjia tribes. It is a small village consisting of 30 to 50 households. Here, the mother Goddess Dwarsani is worshipped by Bhunjia Jhankar (priest). Dwarsani is a tutelary deity of the Bhunjias and also the deity of the tribal people of this locality.

Legend : (a) A legend runs that the goddess Dwarsani was found in the jungle. When a Paharia was digging root his spade hit a stone, from where blood came up. Goddess Dwarsani in a dream ordered him to worship her. The Paharia immediately went to the spot and started worshipping her. But as he was not aware of the craftsmanship of worship, he failed to satisfy her. So he was instructed in a dream to handover the Goddess to a Bhunjia Jhankar. He did accordingly and the Bhunjia Jhakar could successfully worship and appease her. She is offered goat, cock and hen etc. and is invoked through a Bhunjia shaman. She is worshipped in all the local fairs and festivals like Nuakhai (eating of new rice) Dasahara, Puspuni, Bihanchhina yatra (receiving the seeds), Chauldhua yatra (washing of new rice), Caitra parab etc. Also she is worshipped by the local people as and when they wish and for which there are various rituals.

Thus the two religious institutions stand side by side with a binary ideological base. The one is non-Sanskritized tribals, where they are strict in keeping their own rituals and identity. The other is Sanskritized, which is universal in character; the means of realizing the greater

Indian tradition in a local setting. All the inhabitants of the region assemble in all the fairs and festivals celebrated by both the groups, though the ritual system and the basic structure of worship is different from each other.

Legend (b) : A legend runs how Patalganga has emerged. While wandering in the jungle Rama, Laksmana and Sita entered in Katpar-Puruvadi mountain range and reached near Gurudongar. Sita felt thirsty. Rama asked Laksmana to fetch water. He searched around the jungle but did not find water. Being harassed, Laksmana prayed to the Earth Goddess for some water, but in vain. Thus out of anger Laksmana took out his bow. He pierced the earth with his arrow, immediately a water fountain emerged. Sita quenched her thirst. Rama was offended to know the method of procuring water. He said that it is a land of some people. It was necessary to obtain permission from the land-owner before procuring water that way.

So they began to search for the land-owner. To the east of the fountain a big mountain (I) 'Gurudongar' was found. They climbed to that mountain and found a sage on meditation. Rama paid homage to the Siddhaguru and gave his identity to the sage, and was welcomed by the latter.

Rama said that the mountain would be known as Gurudongar (I)—the seat of Siddhaguru. Then he expressed his apology for the method of procuring water from his land without his permission. The sage became glad and said that they have purified the region by their presence. Rama said that the place from where the fountain is emerged would be known as Patalganga. The sanctity of having a dip in river Ganga would be equal to have a dip in Patalganga.

Next, Rama went into the jungle and met some monsters. He fought and killed them all. The place where he fought with monsters is called Judhghat (2) (fighting place) and where he took his bathe is called Snanghat (3) (bathing place). These two brooks are the offshoots of Patalganga flowing in the jungle. It is said that the remaining monsters were turned into stones cursed by Rama.

Analysis :

According to Bascom "legends are prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was as it is today. They are often the counterpart in verbal traditions of written history." (Basacom : 1981 : 98)

It is difficult to date the wanderings of Rama, Laksmana and Sita to Patalganga. No historical evidence also supports it. But the oral traditions current in this area reflect some truth on this legend. The surface of the legend is clear that Patalaganga emerged after Rama, Sita and Laksmana's arrival in this place. This is the people's belief about the holy place. This is the people's belief about the holy place. It is associated with the emotions and ideologies of the folk and their deep reverence to Rama, the god incarnate. But when we analyse the legend with the help of local oral history current among the people we may find some points. That the place originally was a natural fountain and the mythical characters and events have been associated with it is correct. This someone may be a chieftain or a king or storyteller. For it the local oral history may be examined. The establishment of the fountain as a sacred centre and building up Jagannath temple near it, is the most important thing.

To know whether the legend of Rama associated with Patalganga is dated in remote past or recent past.

When we look back to the history, beginning from 13/14th century till century, this land was ruled over the Gonds of Central India. The inaccessible huge mountain and dense dark forests till 1950s was a tribal dominated region where the village organizations were self regulated along with their sovereign power in the field of political and religious hierarchy. The Chauhan rulers of Khariar got their throne over throwing the Gond rulers. They subdued them and kept them as their Umraha and Gauntias—village administrators—and gave them the religious hierarchy in the village organizations. Inspite of this there was hostility among them as the Chauhan rulers were patronizing the non-tribals like Brahmins, Baniks, Telis, Malis etc. By way of this, the Brahmins got much patronization from the rulers. They were diplomatic and were helping the rulers in the field of administration too. Gradually hostility developed among the tribals and the Brahmins. When the rulers began to evict tribals from their lands on the advice of the Brahmins, the tribals revolted. The rulers subdued them either by force or by adopting and implementing certain cultural process. They introduced some media of popular instructions by establishing some sacred centres (4). Thus they could capture mass and through religious institutions. It was an important tact of the rulers to run their administration.

Prior to Chauhan rule in Khariar, the self regulated social organization and the village administration were in force according to tribal ideological methods. These tribal groups belonging to Dravidian language family were devoted to the Earth Mother-Goddess Dwarsani. Then the village headman, priest and shaman were

selected from among the tribals themselves and they had their autonomous power. There was no place for high caste people like Bramhins, Kshatriyas, etc. in any point of tribal life except some non-tribal manual workers like potter, Teli, Gaurs, Doms etc. who too were originally inhabiting this area. But due to change of political power sons of the soil were subdued, (5) their religio-cultural powers were curtailed, and the Brahmins got upper hand. The tribals of Boden area considered Brahmin as their enemy as the kings had conferred upon them the status of royal priest-Rajguru-by negating them. Prior to Brahmins, the tribals themselves were accepted as priests and they performed rites when a king was enthroned. But the desire of the kings to be Sanskritized and taking the help of the educated Bramhins in their socio-political and religious activities had deprived tribals of their attachment to the rulers and as such enemity between the Bramhins and tribals took place in such a way that they considered the white skinned Bramhins as 'Pandra boka'—white sheep and scarified them to the alter of their own goddesses. This sort of sacrifice in some places of Kalahandi were continued for a long time. Also tribal Gauntias and Umrahs were against Bramhins to settle in their areas. The tribals started sacrificing cows and buffaloes in their rituals and were not taking water from the Bramhins. This was the socio-regious situation of this region till the beginning of the 19th century. (6)

During the third decade of 19th century a sage named Ramakrishna Das arrived at 'Kotgaon' and discovered the fountain. At that time the fountain was not considered as a sacred place. He stayed there making up his mind to made it a Matha (sacred centre) for the sages and people. He announced before the people that God Rama had given him in a dream which is the legend

itself. The sage narrated the whole story to the people and they all accepted it as true. The pairs of foot-print engraved on a stone was believed to be the foot print of Rama and Sita. Thus the sage institute a Jajna (sacred ritual) and declared that the fountain bears the sign of Ramayana age, people were attracted to it and gradually it came to the notice of Padman Singh, the then Chauhan king of Khariar. He visited the place, built the four walls of the fountain, and also a Jagannath temple and established a Sivalinga, with all these the place became a sacred centre. He granted two villages-Binopur and Kerapadar-to the worshipper (Pujari) of that temple who are Brahmin' by caste. The Pujari with the instruction of the king began to perform Brahmanic rituals according Hindu view of life. The king also allotted tax free land to meet expenses taking holy dip in Patalganga and worship in the temple.

But the villagers, Umrahs and Gauntias of Boden, Boirgaon and other who were exercising the supreme power, next to the king of Khariar, refused to keep any Bramhin in their own village. So, though Boden is a Block Headquarter now, having a High school, state Bank, police Station etc. no Brahmin lives there. There is a belief among the people that, as this land belong to the Goddess, who allotted the land for the non-Bramhins, no Bramhmin can live there. No Bramhin also has yet tried to settle in these villages till now.

The Laria Gonds were used to sacrifice cows and the Kondhs were sacrificing buffaloes. The cow killing has, however, been stopped, but in south-western Orissa, the Kondhs have not stopped buffalo sacrifice in their festivals. As this is a land where Bramhins were humiliated as "Pandra boka" and the cows were being slaughtered

in the rituals, the king might have planned to stop these through making a sacred Hindu centre in this tribal dominated land. By such an effort the tribals gradually got Sanskritized being influenced by the royal and Bramhinical traditions. Formerly the Gonds, Kondhs and Bhunjias were not taking water from the Bramhins, but now not only take water from them but also they take sandal paste and sacred thread and have adopted several Brahmanic rites and rituals in their family and Hindu festivals in social ceremonies. Now as the ideology of worship of cow and reverence for Bramhins are accepted by the tribals, so nontribals like Bramhins and Paiks have accepted tribal Goddess Dwarsani as their local deity. They too offer sacrifice to appease her in several local festivals. The cultural interaction in-between the indigenous and greater Indian traditions have now come to force complimentary to each in this way.

In the legend of Rama associated with Patalganga, the folk have associated local elements and imaginations to keep their culture and identity. After quenching their thirst, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana went to Gurudongar, the seat of the Sage 'Siddha Guru'. This shows the sanction of a local sage by God Rama himself. It may be noted here that Dwarsani, the popular folk deity, is the daughter of Siddha guru. It speaks of the tribal domination in the legend of Patalganga.

It is a usual technique of aristocracy or the rulers to sanctify a status to the rebels in order to propitiate their emotions. In order to evolve the tribals into the process of sanskritization, the king had established a Hindu sacred centre in a tribal dominated area. For doing so the king had also to accept the tribal Goddess Dwarsani. Thus on the 10th day of Dasahara two arrows from the seat of Dwarsani at Kotgaon were brought to the king

of Khariar, for a ritual called Lakhbindha or arrow shooting. At the bottom of Bundia-dongar hill, near Khariar town, on a large ground, a 25 feet high bamboo is being posted and a lemon is placed on its top. Two arrows borrowed from Dwarsani, one as the symbol of royal power and the other that of tribal power, are used to shot respectively by the king and a tribal hero from Boden area. The successful archer gets reward of a golden plate (Swarnapatra) and was declared the best archer of the year (7).

The sanction given to Siddha Guru by Rama in the legend, and the status to Goddess Dwarsani by the king in Lakhbindha ritual are two instances supporting conclusion that the Brahmanical force has compromised with the tribal power.

Looking deeper into the legend we can trace back to the liberation of Ahalya by Rama, from the cursed state of a stone. By the simple touch of the Lord incarnate, the age old cursed fairy attained 'moksa'-emacipation from her barren state. Similarly, in the legend at hand, we notice a barren stony heath prior to Rama's coming, without vegetation, without life, profane. The springing up of a brook by the touch of the divine arrow could plausibly be associated with the dropping of saviour's hand who brought water, the symbol of life and vegitation. Prior to the provision of such a source of water the folk here were under the food gathering habits who later on changed in to a food producing community.

The sacred belief conferred upon 'Ganga' in Indian culture and belief about the attainment of 'moksa' through a holy dip in it, is a craving of the cut off communities, it is not at their easy reach in terms of distance and communication. Hence, they endeavoured to compensate

their state of religious handicap by instituting the holiness of Ganga upon the local fountain. As regard to Goddess Ganga the people of this area worship sixteen sisters of Gangadevi as village tutelary deities. Gurudongar is the counterpart of Devatatma Himalaya.

The Brahminic and the tribal rituals are mutually attended and celebrated by both the communities which shows the Indian cultural interaction and integration in a tribal region.

Notes

1. All the hills and mountains of this region are regarded as Gurudongar, the seat of Guru. It is the influence of the Devatatma Himalaya. In the month of Chaitra, Gurubudha the prototype of Siva is worshipped in Gurudongar every year.
2. 'Judh' is a derivative of 'Yudha' which means war. The place of battle in between the monsters and Rama is known as 'Judh ghat'. 'Ghat' means the bank of a river/rivulet/brook.
3. After fighting with monsters Rama took his bathe in a brook. The place where Rama took his bathe was known as 'Snanghat.'
4. In ancient India there were many ashramas (hermitages) where sages used to live, far away from the hunts of men, in quiet solitude, devoting their time to spiritual culture, they would naturally draw persons of a religious frame of mind who would now and then, go to them for guidance and advice. Those ashramas in the course of time, became places of pilgrimage. And as traditions began to grow round these places became more sacred and

important (Pavitrananda : 1969 : 496)

5. A proverb runs in this area as such : "Ganar je bhuin aru rajar je raij" means the land belong to Gonds where as the kingdom is of the king. It shows the predominance of the kings of the Gonds. A sanction is there in the proverb—May the king have taken the kingdom still the land belong to the Gonds.

6. In Hatibandha, a village of the Kondhs, predomination of the Goddess Dwarsani is noticed. A Brahmin devata is worshipped with her. It is said that a young brahmin boy was sacrificed by the Kondhs at the alter of Dwarsani. But his soul became 'Duma' or spirit after death. Since that day he is worshipped as a Bramhin Devta by the Knodh preist. Possessed in a Kondh shaman he demands sacred thread (paita) but he is not provided with it as a belief current among the Kondhs that if he would get the 'paita', then he might regain bramhinical power and cause harm to them.

7. Now this Lakbindha ritual has been stopped since last 1952 after the royal power is ceased.

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Folk Songs of Kalahandi

I

Kalahandi is a district situated in the Western part of Orissa. Bolangir district of Orissa and Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh are to the north of it, Koraput and Madhya Pradesh to the south-west and Phulbani and Koraput to the east. The district extends over an area of 11,835 Sq. Kms. and constitutes 7.75 per cent of the total area of the State. According to the Census of India, 1981 the total population of this district live in the rural areas. The population belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are 2, 11, 069 and 4, 01, 887 respectively. Fifty per cent land are cultivable plain land, with natural facilities of irrigation whereas the rest fifty per cent land is covered with plateau, mountains and jungles. The life pattern of the people of this area is regulated and adapted according to the geographical and natural resources.

The way life of this locality is traditional. Fifty per cent people of this area are cultivators and the rest live on forest products, food gathering and adopting manual labour throughout the year. In comparison to the other regions of Orissa, the locality has not been industrialized or modernized. People of hilly area as well as the peasant society have not got a scope to change their traditional way of life. It is a fact that due to failure of crops, the financial condition of the people of this area is not well off. Half of the year goes away in making their living; in differently ways such as collection of forest products, digging soil and engagement in agricultural work; the output of which is negotiable for a normal way of survival.

Moreover the growing population with the limited source of income has debackled their normal way of life.

The natural calamities particularly the appearance of drought in every decade, the exploitative view of the businessmen and contractors, the continuous crop failure and the lack of self-employment in the rural areas, and the socio-economic and religious systems and traditions have made this district backward, in all respect. Inspite of it, the people of this areas live their life with a sense of community, sharing their pains and pleasures among themselves. The twofold life as opposed to each other is seen among the people of Kalahandi. We see the people singing, dancing and sharing their pleasure in one hand and the struggling for their survival on the other. Thus, the people of this locality try to forget the stark reality of the painful moment of their hard life by expressing themselves in singing, dancing and merrymaking in their community.

Burdened with the bare realities of life, the folk-mind has never hesitated to express its creative ability and imagination through the oral tradition and performing arts. As community life is the social characteristic of the people of this area, they never think of enjoying their creative arts without the participation of the whole community. Any one in the community can be a singer or a dancer without prior training, irrespective of age and sex. The folk oral traditions are handed down from generation to generation. One more basic characteristics of these oral traditions are the non-appearance of its authorship. Still, there are some folk bards called 'Geet-Kudia' belonging to both the sexes, expert in composing songs spontaneously while singing and dancing in some ceremony or social occasion.

The folk songs of Kalahandi cannot be separated from dance and music. The fullest enjoyment and expression is inherent in singing, dancing and playing music by them. The rhythm of the Muhuri, Dhol and Nishan – a musical concert of the local music players attracts the hearts of the singers and dancers as well as onlookers.

The Folk songs of Kalahandi may be classified into some sub-genres as follows :

A.	The songs of entertainment	Rasarkeli, Sajani, jaifula, Bhamara, Gua-nadia, Nialimalli, Dalkhai etc.
B.	Play songs	a) Baria, Bangri, Kalakokila, Jeeralabanga b) Khamkhamali, Luklukani, Pithapuden, Maachh sare ghina, Kath jia geet etc.
C.	Work song	Halia, Sagadia, Palarua
D.	Customary songs based on 'Rites de passage'	Lullaby, Marriage, Mourning, Duma utren
E.	Ritual songs	Thakurani geet, Gobha utara geet, Tokiparab, Chaitparab, Holi etc.
F.	Songs related to Purana	Palia, Pacharauchara and Badi geet
G.	Songs nominated upon musical	

instrument Dhab, Ghumura, Madal

The classification and the distribution of folk songs of Kalahandi is not different from the folk songs of Western Orissa, as there is a cultural continuity in it. So, while studying the folk songs of Kalahandi, it may not be improper to take it as the folk song of Western Orissa.

A. The songs of Entertainment :

Rasarkeli song (savour of erotic taste), Jaiphula (a flower), Bhamara song (black bee song), Gua-nadia geet (betel nut-coconut song), Nialimalli (a combination of two flowers), Dalkhai song (leaf eater song) are the songs sung by both the young boys and girls. Rasarkeli song represents the intense love and attraction of a male towards a female. The male addresses a female as 'Rasarkeli' which literally means the store of erotic savour. Jaipuhula (one petalled Jasmine) and Nialimalli are the names of the flowers. The combination of Niali flower with Malli (Jasmine) symbolizes the close and undivided friendship in between the companions. One friend addresses the other as Jaipuhula or Nialimalli. All the songs, thus, represent the deep love and relationship between the companions. "Bhamara geet" is especially sung by the females only to tease and disrepute the males. The eternal relationship of a black bee with the flower is a well known allegory in Indian aesthetics. The lustful character of a black bee indulged with many of flowers is the symbol of a lustful adulterer. The Bhamara song of Kalahandi represents the above sense of poetic expression.

The "gua-nadia" geet is also an interesting song found in this locality. Gua means betel nut and 'nadia' means coconut. These two fruits hard on the surface

and juicy within represent the hard and strong surface of the woman's behaviour with a hidden softness in her. If one can manage to penetrate into the heart of the woman by overcoming her rude behaviour he can only enjoy her savour. The theme of the Gua-nadia song of this region is, thus, symbolic with poetic taste. Dalkhai is a song well distributed in Western Orissa. In Sambalpur district this song is used at the time of rituals. But in Kalahandi, the song is used at the time of entertainment. Sajani (addressed by one girl to her companion) is a song of conversation in between two girl companions.

All these songs are based on eternal love. The joys and sorrows of human feelings have been reflected in it. The sweet and emotive feelings of the lovers of both the sexes, are portrayed in the above songs in a simple and lucid manner. The love and hatred, the attraction towards each other, the thirst for union, the social bond as an obstacle in their free unity, the arrogance of a female to her beloved male, the presumption and pretension of the young lady to her lover, the desire for elopement by the couple, the social hindrances standing against their way and will, the strong emotional desire to die and dedicate for each other are portrayed in the said songs. The exultant feelings of lovers flows down from their heart like a wild stream in the form of oral tradition. The eternal love and beauty and the symbol of human feelings have been picturized in it. The greatness of this song is that it is ever-living as oral tradition and it is the song through which a young man expresses his secret desire before a beloved to choose his life partner in which the society also gives its full recognition. Some songs are offered below :

1. Rasarkeli Song:

Rasarkelire,

Malifula phutikari maha maha basu
Kala bhamarake dekhi gaha gaha hasu
Tara tara hele nani alge jai basu
Kie toke kain kahela sangata
Alge jai basu nani de kahide re.
(You bloom and smell like jasmine,
You smile at the sight of black bee,
when I approach, you keep aloof,
who did say you, what o mate,
you sit alone, O' maid, tell me)

Rasarkelire,

Nandi tene pare kire gurjiphula dhoba,
Amemane chaluthile naikara lobha,
Nandi tene pare kire pakhanara gadi,
Chhane para jugithiba sangata
Sange jima gadhi kia Dagadia re.
Maa bua nani baile sangata,
Jima udlia, kia Dagadia re.
(O Rasarkli, Across the river, there are while flowers.
Don't avarice on us during our walk,
Across the river, there's the stone seat
O compeer wait me a while
we shall go to bathe together
O how imposter he is,
if parents deny O comanion, we
will elope.)

2. **Jaiphula Song:**

Jaiphulare
Ṣahaja patara hate,
Bana luga dei anichhe tote
Jaiphulare
Ghaita balibu mote.
(O jaiphula, saj leaf in my hand.
I have brought you instead of woven
Clothes, you will call me husband.)

X X X X

Jaiphulare, panigala sagaraku
mana karithili sunagoriku
Jaiphulare,
Chora buhinela taku.
(O jaiphula, water glided down to
the sea, I desired the golden fairy,
O jaiphula, the thief stole her.)

3. **Bhamara Song:**

Khaili rasa gulgula,
Tora nai babu maheji pila,
Maheji pila ho sate,
Mora sange mana bhula bhamarare.
(I ate juicy sweets
You have no wife nor children.
Really, you come to me,
O black bee.)

X X X X

Duare ghantilu dhana,
Ame tukilamane khailu pana
Khailu pana ho sate
Pilamane hinamana bhamara re.
(Dried paddy on the corridor
We girls chewed betel,
The boys are deprived;
O black bee.)

4. **Gua-nadia Song:**

Barike dogila hansa,
Muhuke dekhile ho sate,
Budhi bayase,
Sate, kusari rakhichhu rasa re
Guanadia
Sate kindiri ase bhendia re
Guanadia.
(Swan corssed the boundary
Your visage looks old in age
You are the stock of sugarcane
O guanadia, the young lad moves around you.)

X X X X

Ahare ukiabati!
Tui nai heluga sate amara jati
Sate kole dhari chuma detire guanadia,
Sate kindiri ase bhendia re guanadia.
(O brighrty! were you my caste,

Really, I'd kiss you putting on my lap,
O guanadia, the young lad moves around you.)

5. **Nialimalli :**

Tena pati base Bandu
Machha nai bali kainje kandu
Sate bhaluchama tike bandhu re
Nialimalli, Nialimallike paimi bali
Kede asha Karithili.
(The Bandu [1] bird sat on the
'Tenda pati' [2] (water lifting crane)
Why do you cry, that you have no
moustache tie a bear skin on it
O Nialimalli
to get you, how great hope I had !)

6. **Dalkhaire Song :**

Dalkhaire,
Suru suru bhaji mulapatara
khaibake nanai hela batara
Dasata anguthi panchata mundi
Ame naijanu dalkhai, Khechada budhi
Ki Dalkhaire,

1. **Bandu pati** : A bird like owl
2. **Tenda pati** : Water lifting wooden crane.

(The little greens and raddish leaf,
O leaf-eater became worthy of eating
there are ten fingers for five rings
O dalkhai we don't know how to tease.)
Dalkhaire, chala tukilemane nadike jima,

Rupara thaline lau katima
Sunara thaline jogara [1] nema,
Khaibake dema juna puruna
Suibake seja palanka uchhaidame ki dalkhaire,
(O leaf-eater, let us all the girls, go to the
river, Cut the gourd in silver plate,
take the 'jogara' in golden plate
we will feed them the best old stock
fetch them quit and palanquin to sleep.)

7. **Sajani Song:**

Sajani, kahin jaithila jane,
Khata paridele basiba chhane,
Katha charipada bane sajanire.
(O companion, where had you been alone?
You will sit for sometime when offered cot,
to have four good words gossip, O companion.)

X X X X

Sajani, alua chaula jhain,
Tumara mana katha kahila nai
Sajani, aja janigali muhin.
(O companion, the white rice is bright,
You did not tell me your heart
today I found it.)

1. Jogara: Fooding and clothing provided to the host by their relatives for the guest as the part of the ritual.

A. **Play Song:**

The Baira, the Bangari, the Kalakokila and the jeera labanga are the songs sung by the two groups of girls at the moonlit night on the village road. The girls put each one's hand against other's waist and form a group. Seven

to eight girls constitute a group. While singing the song, one group moves towards the other and recedes and other group answers them as follows :

First group questions in a chorus :

Uli Uli Uli Uli baria,
Uli uli uli uli re,
Se uli gala bajara buli.
Mahitani gala dhuli baria
Mahitani gala dhulire.
Kholi kholi gala gai baria,
Kholi kholi gala gaire
Tamara pina to usara nai, (repeat)
Rahasa gadima kahin baria,
Rahasa gadima kahinre.
(The cow went on the road,
Your corridor is not wide
Where shall we post the flag post ?)

second group answers the above questions in chorus as follows :

Kholine rahasa gada baria
Kholine rahasa gadare
Gahatia ghare annuchhe jara,
Oso kasa tike kara baria,
Osa kasa tike karare.
(Post the flag post on the road,
The wife of village headman is on fever
Arrange medicine for her.)

The luklukani (hide and seek), Khamkhamali pithapuden (making cakes), maachh sare ghina (purchase a leaf of fish), Kath jia song the song of going for firewood) and some other games are local folk-games. In each and every game the songs are inevitable. The various characters,

events and conversations presented in the play-action help the children expose their creative urges in the process of socialization.

C. **Work Song :**

In most of the villages of kalahandi, the landless people work in their master's house as agricultural labourers. They work throughout the year for stipulated quantity of paddy; about ten to fifteen quintals per annum. The agricultural labourers are known as Halia, literally implying ploughman. The earning provided to the halia by his master is insufficient to maintain his family throughout the year. Still the halia, with his limited source of income tries to satisfy his family. He wants to live happily within his limited universe. Poverty is the real identity of his life. He works as hard as the bullocks, but never gets a plateful of rice to fill up his own stomach or to satisfy his family.

In the "halia song" the life picture of a halia family of this locality is reflected in a lively manner, in which one can find the pitiable condition of his family. The master knows how to extract hard work from the halia, but never cares for his miserable condition. The halia not only works in the field but also he goes to the forest with a bullock cart to collect fire wood. After coming from the forest he requests his master to give some paddy. He remembers that in his house there in no single grain of rice to cook. After releasing the bullocks from the cart the halia goes to his master to beg rice. In the Halia song the above description are as follows :

Eade sagada anili gharake ghare gadi hela thia

Katha patra sari mahajana thane sabu katha kahe thika,

Samia hela je masuri dhana ho, napidia mahajana.
Bela uchhluchhi ghare adhadiya nahin
Kutibe bhuasen dhana.

(brought the cart to the house
finishing collecting wood, tells before his master
O master, it is time, give me masur paddy
the time is going.
no paddy in house, to be husked by the women.)

The hard and strenuous life of a halia or sagdia (cartman) becomes colourful with the soothing and inspiring words of his beloved who inspires him to live a happy life. The romantic spectacles of nature like the couple of weaver birds living happily in the nest on the mango tree and the frog couple living under the arum tree shape their ideas. Keeping an eye on the uncertainty of the life span, the halia invites his mate to make a nest like in the following manner.

Ama gachha tale baya basa kala Sarugachha
tale benga
Marigale jiba thiba ki nathiba tumari amari sanga.

(the couple of weaver birds nesting on
the mango tree,
the couple of frog, under the arum tree
What is the surety of life, let's be mates.)

D. Customary Songs based on "Rites de passage":

In the various stages of social life, song in inevitably employed. Mother sings lullabies to sleep her obstinate child. The boys and the girls sing song while playing.

Songs are sung from the time of child birth to death ritual of human beings. In marriage ceremony, there are some rituals where the song is inevitable. Without the song the rituals are said to be incomplete. In the time of the marriage negotiation of a girl, the young girls of her village welcome and appease the guests through singing and dancing. During marriage ceremony the various rituals such as Haldi Makha (smearing turmeric paste on the bride) Mali chagha (adorning the bride with beads and ornaments) Telchagha (smearing of oil to the bride and bridegroom) Mangal geet (auspicious song) are exclusively needed. In the Telchagha song of the paharia tribe, the ritual is described as below :

Tel tel balsa nani kahan pawe tel,
Tel tel balsa nani kain tel chaghia,
Hirabati parbati kain tel chaghia
Dada achhe tel chaghei, bada bohu awa,
Kaka achhe tel chaghei Kaki mane awa
Dadi achhe tel chaghei, Aai mane awa
Tel tel balse nani, kai tel chaghia.
Hirabati parbati, kusum tel chaghia.

(O girl, you are speaking of oil, where from will you fetch oil ?

O hirabati, O Parbati, which oil will you smear ?

Elder brother is coming to smear oil, elder sister-in-law coming.

Uncle is coming to smear oil, aunt is coming.

Grand father is coming to smear oil, grand mother is coming.

O Nani, you are speaking of oil, which oil will you smear ?

O Hirabati, O Parbati, smear kusum oil on her body.)

While the bride bade farewell along with the bridegroom, the Kanialama song recited by her parents and companions is heart-rending and awful. In this song the painful feelings of the bride's departure from her own parents house is described in a heart-breaking manner. The parents feel sorry for the departure of their beloved daughter. The song is as follows :

"Dhire dhire renganani dhire dhire renga,
Dhire dhire renga nani kania lama bele,
Mudar jawa khusal jahi, gagar luga khusal jahi
Dhire dhire renga nani kania lama bele.
Bua kande Koten sale, maa kande ronda ghare,
Na kanda nakanda ho yo, Kania lama bele,
Gaile mangala geeta, dele hulahuli,
Na kanda na kanda na bua kania lama bele."

(O bride, move slowly,
Your hair knot will fall down.
Your clothes will slip down.
It is the time of your farewell
O girl, move slowly)
(Father is crying near husking place.
Mother is crying in the kitchen,
Don't cry, Don't cry, O,
It is the time of her farewell.
They sang the auspicious song.
And gave hulahuli.
Don't cry father and mother
It is the time of her farewell.)

Mourning : In traditional Society the place of woman in the society is inferior in comparison to men. The new bride has to face many difficulties in her husband's house. Her mother-in-law and her husband's sister became hostile

and scandal her. Being the victim of them, she remembers the sweet days of her mother's house. Sometimes the situation in her family becomes so intricate and unbearable that she comes to her mother's house for rescue. There, keeping her head on her mother's shoulder she wails which bursts out in form of a song :

E mago, kaisi miracha badato raga, ma go
mui po heithile tui deithitu bhaga, ma go
mui jhi heli bali tui moke
nandine boholaidelu ma go;
mui nai sunila katha sunuchhi ma go;
moke chori hotli khaila baluchhan ma go

X X X X

E bohu, mora suiba thana mela hela go bohu,
mora korihia darapanake kena dekhba go bohu.
moke kena kuri deba go bohu
Toro kaje randhi deba go bohu.
(O mother, the unripe chilly is very bitter.
Were I a son, you'd given me my share,
As I am your daughter
You threw me adrift the river, O mother.
I am scandaled, I had never been.
I am alleged a thief in their house.)

X X X X

(O sister-in-law, my sleeping bed falled empty
Who shall avail my old mirror.

Who will comb my hair

Who will help your cooking, sister-in-law)

Not only the daughter, but the mother as well remonstrates herself as to why she put her beloved daughter in such a hell. Remembering her daughter's pitiable condition she cries which flows out of her heart in the form of song.

Duma Utra Song :

It is a common belief of the people of this locality that, the soul of the man after his death never dies. It takes rebirth again. In some tribes the soul or 'Duma' of the deceased person is invited to the house through a ritual, which is popularly known as Duma Utara – literally meaning the invitation of the spirit from the unseen world. The relatives of the dead arrange this ritual by inviting the Duma into an earthen pot on the bank of a river or a water source. At that time the whole clan and the kinsmen of the dead are invited and the worship of Old souls (Juna Duma) begins. Then the worship and invitation of new Duma (soul) is carried through an invocation. The new soul in summoned with the old souls to the kitchen of the descendant of the deadman. The new soul (Nua-duma) is worshipped as a God or ancestor spirit. It is a common belief that the ancestor spirits save their respective families from diseases, unseen dangers and watch their fields. Even they predict the future occurrences to them and save them from those difficulties. The people count their last five ancestors as living spirit always watching over them. In all the rituals related to "rites de passage" and "rites de intensification" the invitation and worship of the ancestor spirit is inevitable. When one is blessed with a male child, then it is believed

that some ancestor 'Duma' has taken rebirth into his family. Through a divination process they try to know the particular ancestor who has taken rebirth as that male child. In all the agricultural festivals the Duma is worshipped with due importance.

The invitation of Duma, i. e. the transformation of human soul to divine soul is performed through a long and complex ritual. The invocation is sung by the respective ethnic bards for a long period of time.

In the Dumautra song the origin of the respective caste, the glorious personalities and their miraculous deeds are described in a gracious manner as to inspire the present generation with their glorious heritage. Here a ritual of Gond Duma utra, while 'parghania' a gond bard invoking the old and new spirit, is presented originally.

Ero rela rela je Ero rela rela,
Gahar mati pati je gahar chhotibudhi
Gahar pardesien je gahar Baburai
Gahar je gangadi je gahar je gangadi,
Ata gada soga je sabu thula hele,
Babubole babu je loko borun jibu,
Kar gharke jibu babu, kar gharke jibu,
Gadake je Damdagarh Markam gharke jibu
Dasa parigala je dasa parigala.
Atagarha sagane je biha borun heba,
Babu bale babu je biha borun heba,
Ken godke jibu babu, Lanji garhke jibu,
Netam gharke jibu babu, Netam gharke jibu.
(Ero rela rela je Ero rela,
the holy soil and the seat of the village.

The goddess chhotibudhi of the village.
Goddess pardesien of the village.
Goddess Gangadei of the village.
The eight clan gathered at one place,
O boy, You will go to invite all the kinsmen
Whose house will you go to, my boy
to whom will you go ?
You will go to Damdagarh
find Markam clan there.
Oh our bad time arrived, our bad time came.
A marriage ceremony will be held among
the eight fort clans.
O boy, you will go to invite them all.
To which fort will you go my boy ?
You will go to Lanjigarh
There you will find netam clan,
You will go to netam's house.)

Formerly the Duma song was in 'Gondi' language, but now all the Gonds of Kalahandi speak Oriya dialect and sing their invocations in local Oriya. Every ethnic group has their own way of rituals for inviting Duma, though the basic worldview as regards to the ancestor worship is uniform throughout the locality.

Thakurani Song :

The distribution of Thakurani worship as the Goddess of Smallpox is prevalent all over India. Though the smallpox has been eradicated in this country, the traditional belief of Thakurani mata for the goddess of smallpox still persists in some parts of India. Even in last 1986-87, this belief was predominant in the Kutia

kondh tribe of Kalahandi. Hundreds of Kutia Kondhs of this district died out of some unknown disease. The medical facilities provided for their treatment were refused. They had a strong belief in their mind that their Thakurani mata—mother goddess of smallpox was humiliated for some cause and hence out of anger she took revenge on them. They also confirmed that no medical treatment can save their life, unless Goddess Thakurani is appeased with buffalo sacrifice. No doubt this is a blind belief. But the people of these area have a strong faith in it. In the months of Fagun and Chait (February and March) when the outbreak of chicken pox and Measeales takes place, they worship Thakurani mata by offering her the somke of resin, syrup of molasses along with the turmeric and neem leaf and recite the song with deep devotion. In a Thakurani song recited by the village priest it is described that Mother Thakurani, taking a basket in her left hand and a broom in her right hand, washes up the villages and takes hundreds of lives gathering them in her basket. Even the Gods are also not left out of the clutches of her and become the victim of her sharp eyes. The song is as follows :

Mago, akhi chhipichhipi mago mundare chhipiri

Loi loi chale budhi mai hata mela kari.

Aago jagat janani mata

Nagara bharmani kari jau more dai

Lima haladi paile go thana tumari

Mata go rakha dukha harani.

(O mother, with your twinkling eyes

and a basket on your bushy head.

You walk leaning, spreading your hands.

O universal mother
You move in the cities and villages
You relish in Neem and turmeric
O mother, save me, take away all my miseries.)

E. Ritual Songs :

Govautara Song :

The Kondh tribe of Kalahandi were practising meriah sacrifice till the last part of 19th century. They were sacrificing their daughter and son to appease Dharani mata — the earth Goddess. There is a strong belief and a worldview in their mind that, the Goddess will never be satisfied unless she is offered human blood. The Kondhs believe that the Goddess would give more harvest if human blood is offered to Her. Even in this religious rites, the Jani (priest) of the community was offering his elder son to dharani mata. This tradition was prevalent in the Kondh dominated area which was suppressed by the Britishers. Now, the meriah sacrifice has stopped, but to compensate the cultural loss of human sacrifice, the Kondhs offer Buffaloes in place of it. This trend is still continuing in Kalahandi and in other Kondh areas of South-West Orissa. This ritual is known as Pod-puja, literally means buffalo sacrifice. The Durga Mahishasura myth of the 'Devi-Bhagabat' and 'Chandi puran' has been associated with the buffalo sacrifice. The Kondhs believe that the Dharani mata as Durga and the buffalo brought for sacrifice as the symbol of Mahisasura — the demon. This ritual takes place on a Thursday during the brightmoon period of the month of Pausa. This ritual is observed by the Kondhs as well as the co-habitants as an agricultural festival. Before the buffalo is sacrificed on the altar of Goddess Dharani mata, a long

and mythic song is invocated by the 'Gova Jani' (the priest who knows the essence of the myth) from the preceding evening. The process of recitation begins from Wednesday evening till the end of the myth by Thursday morning. The ritual is known as 'Gova utara' literally means the dismounting of essence (of the Kondh myth). Soon after the Gova utara is over the buffalo is sacrificed before the goddess and its head is offered in Her altar. The song is most secret, handed down from the generations of Gova Jani. The main singer Gova Jani with his choir singers use to sing the song with a wooden musical instrument named 'Sadki'. All over the night the Gova Jani and the choir of singers take mahua liquor and sing the song. The song is sung for twelve hours. The beginning of the song is as follows :

E mago Dharam tui
Dharme jaya go pape khaye
E gudguduchhe, rudruduchhe
E kein sabad ho houchhe na je
E kein leela ho houchhena je
Aja nai ho kalanai
Rangal butta tale rud ruduchhe
Ke gota bua janam hauchhe.
Penbora ho, kan bora je
Se gota bua janam houchhe.

(O mother, the king of all virtue
Goodness wins and wickedness perish
what sound there;
what games occuring there ?
Not today nor tomorrow
Beneath the Rengal tree

it is sounding. Who takes birth
Pen Bora and Kan Bora, they are coming)

Tokiparab Song:

The 'Tokiparab' or Tokimara parab' is also a perverted form of female infanticide by the Kondh paroja tribes of Kalahandi. In this festival the Kondh-paroja sacrifice an ewe symbolizing it as the daughter of Jani—the Kondh paroja priest. The objectives of this ritual has nothing dissimilar then the buffalo sacrifice. They think that if the hair or a flesh of the ewe is taken away from the sacrificial ground and buried in the field, the field will be fertile and carry ample harvest. So the Kondh-paroja never cares to get a hair or a piece of flesh at the cost of getting injured. Several invocation songs are sung at the time of Tokiparab, e.g. one old Kondh paroja tries to get a hair or a piece of flesh of the ewe and when he fails to get it, out of sorrow he sings,

Alo jani wena, menda buri kaji
Soda gosia soda, menda buri kaji
Hartarati jaga kitam menda buri kaji
(Hello Jani, hear me, for a hair of an ewe,
Hear master hear, for the hair of an ewe,
The whole night awoke, for the hair of an ewe,)

Chait Parab Geet:

The festival Chaitparab is observed in the South-Eastern part of Kalahandi. This festival continues for a month. It is a spring festival of this locality. The symbolic representation of hunting and food gathering from the jungle are shown by the young tribal lads acting like hunters. In a common place of the village called

'shemelmuda' all the villagers unite to take part in chait parab. Irrespective of age and sex, the folk participate in dancing, singing and playing music collectively. Feasting and drinking are the most important items in this festival. Sharing of joys and expressing their creative self is the sole motif of this festival. This is a festival especially meant for the unmarried young boys and girls. Song competitions among them take place all over the night with music and dancing. They boys and the girls form separate group facing each other on the common place. The natural setting of the blue-green mountain, moon lit night, cold air with the fragrant scent of wild flower is the folk stage for the community dance. There is no such bar in between the onlooker and the performer. Any onlooker can be a performer without hesitation.

*Chait parab festival is observed in South-Eastern Kalahandi. In western Kalahandi it is called 'Chaitra'. The way of observation of 'Chaitra' is different from that of Chait parab.

As the festival falls on the month of Chait (March) it is popularly known as Chait Parab. The 'Geet kudia' and 'Geet Kudiani' (folk bard of both the sexes) begin the prayer to local deities like earth Goddess along with the Goddess Durga, Saraswati and Sarala. Then after the invocation songs are over the young boys and girls begin their love song as competing each other in the presence of the community. The song is followed with music and dance. The songs are full of erotic sense expressing the naked thought of participants of both the sexes. Some songs are given below :

Rasare, asa asa mora champalo gharani,
Khaiba ke debi ke lala murguni

To kolare basthibi,
Mui rahi rahi kari dharapadigale
kenabate chhadi jibi, Tui birasa nakara mote
Malliphula, birasa nakara mote.

(O Savour, O my golden fairy, do come.
I shall provide you with red deer meat
and will be sitting on your lap.
If caught up, where shall I go ?
O jasmine, don't make me sorry.)

The young girl hearing the love approach of the yound lad, replike like this :

Rasare, Hakadaka deli, Khamana ke gali,
Akhada phikili, kamala tulili,
Satasara phula mude ne khuchili,
Tumar kholi dane gali,
Tumar Tumar para jeta dhangara ke
redhi ne dhamasa deli.

(O Savour, I called everybody and went into the jungle, throwing parched rice, plucking oranges, dressed with seven pronged flowers on my head, I went on your road. I kicked all the young men like you in my heel.)

The Bhatra, Paraja and Gond tribes of eastern Kalahandi enjoy the chait Parab dance heartily. The Dhangda—Young lad invites his beloved Dhangadi—Young lady to sing and dance in this occasion. The Dhangada invites his mate as follows :

Lele rasode, lele rasode,
Sarikelana duta keli aso ho.

Amta rengsa juli, lele rasode,
Amata parwajuli, nachi asa ho.
(O nectar of love, O nectar of love,
Come to play with your Sari-compeer.
You are my friend, since our crawling time
You are my friend like pigeon couple
O Sari, come to dance.)

Besides these songs, the chherchera song in the time of Pausa purnima and the Holi song in the time of Holi-Dola purnima are noteworthy.

F. Songs related Purana:

Songs related to Purana are popularly known as Palia song and Pachara-Uchara song literally meaning the song of question-answer. The mystic and mythic topics of Indian epics are asked by one group and the other group tries to answer it. The question of victory and defeat depends upon the knowledge of the groups. The victors are rewarded for this. Most of the songs are borrowed from the Purana and Sastras and handed down orally. In Ghumura dance this form of songs are employed. This song is the inter link between the folk and elite from.

G. Songs nominated upon Musical Instruments:

The songs especially used in the time of dances are named accordingly. These are Ghumura song in Ghumura dance, Dhab song used in the time of Dhab dance, Madal geet in Madal dance, Danda geet in the time of Danda dance. The Ghumura is a systematic dance in which a classical form is found out. The songs are sung in the line of Oriya Malasri, Chaupadi and Orissi

songs. Besides some folk songs of the locality are also sung in the Ghumura dance which keep the folk classical continuum.

The Dhab is a musical drum played by the male dancers and drummers of Kondh tribes of Kalahandi. The name of the dance and the song is named according to the musical instrument. The young male and female of Kondh tribes perform the Dhab dance singing the Dhab song. Most of the Dhab songs are based on extremely erotic expression with the nude description of sexual enjoyment. This song is sung both by male and female before the community without any hesitation. Dalkhai and Sadarasa songs are two important songs used in the time of Dhab dance. Dhab songs of Kui language are full of pornography symbolically exposing the primodial human instincts. Some of the Dhab songs are given below :

'Jajare Jalia mo ghatimalia basigala denga gachhe,
Hata khete nai goda khete nai khaibake mana achhe,
Kamala, tumar gagare jhule,
Dharai deba tumar mana thile.'

(The notorious and wearer of beads, sat on the tall tree, my oranges dangling on your body. If you wish, you will get me those in my hands. You will make me handy of it.)

Rasare, Jubadehaku,

Jaki rakhiachhuy dui kumbhaku,

Debiboli moke asha delu,

Jaldi jalidi kam helabele dam paisa mulkalu.

(O nectar of love, your body is young,

You hoard your two vessels
You promised to give me
While I was going to get you,
You bargained for money.)

The Mandal dance of the Gond and Bhunjia tribes of Kalahandi is a primitive tribal dance in nature. The songs sung in this dance are known as Sarudhana small property. The free and unhesitating expression in the above songs are interesting, such as :

Khajura khaili ante sarudhana,
khajura khaili ante,
Maa ghara jhia hoila pete
Sate chali na parila bate sarudhana
Chali na parila bate.

(O small property,
I ate date palm carrying in my clothes.
The daughter being pregnant in her mother's house.
Could not walk on the road.)

III

The above discussions are based on the available folklore materials of Kalahandi collected by the author himself. Besides this, the social and aesthetic aspects of the folk songs of Kalahandi need further discussion. Lastly it may be concluded that the Folk oral tradition is the life-pulse of the people of Kalahandi who share their love and affection, joys and sorrows, pains and pleasures in the community with a sense of belongingness. The external value in these folk songs bear the life picture of the people of this locality.



Toki Parab : A Festival of Female Infanticide in Kalahandi

Introduction :

"Toki Parab" (1) is a festival observed by the Kondh-paraja tribe of Kalahandi and Koraput districts in the state of Orissa. The Kandh-paraja tribe live in the Jaipatna, Koksora and Thuamul Rampur Panchyat Samities, especially in the eastern part of kalahandi bounded by the Nawarangpur sub-division of Koraput district. Kalahandi was formerly known as Kondhan Raij. The Kandh-paraja tribe is the offshoot of Kandh and Paraja, (2) both belonging to the Dravidian language group. The total number of Parajas in the district is about five thousands (1980, 102 and 119).

For the field study two Kandh-paraja villages named Paraja-Nagpheni and Ranibahal have been selected. Though it is a festival observed by the Kondh-Paraja trib, thousands of people from other castes and communities of this locality also participate in the festival. The field study was taken up in the month of January 1985.

Historical Background :

In the past the Kondh-paraja tribe were to sacrifice their virgin daughter before the earth Goddess. The Kandh tribe of south east India were practising 'Meriah' or human sacrifice to appease their earth mother Goddess. Even the Kandh priest were sacrificing their eldest son to earth mother Goddess for the sake of their community to get good harvest, good rain, to save their men and domestic animals from the attack of wild animals and to save their community from cholera and small-pox. This practice was in vogue till the last part of 19th century.

In the last part of nineteenth century. The Kandh-Paraja were also used to practising "tokimara" (femal-infanticide). Major Campbell, the agent of suppressing meriah sacrifice in Kandhisthan stopped this cruel tradition forcibly (1838 : 132).

The tradition of Meriah sacrifice was patronised by the Raja and Zamindars of Thuamool Rampur, Mahulpatna (present Jaipatna) and Karlapat in kalahandi Estate. They were arranging the meriah out of their own prisoners and were getting financial gain as well as the administrative support from the furious Kandhas of their respective zamindaries. (1838 : 132).

The victims for meriah were brought by the lower castes like 'Dom (3) and Ghasia (4) and were offered to the kandhas for sacrifice. (1984 : p. 51). Lt. Hill has rightly mentioned in his report that the practice of Meriah had taken place in the hill principality of Kalahandi, Patna, Khariar and Nawapara. (1838). In 1844. Cl. Owseley, the agent to the Governor General of South-West Frontier Agency reported that the practice of Meriah was prevalent in Sonepur, khariar, Bindra Nawagarh and Bamra. Major Campbell, and Captain Macdwell covered the hilly area of Koraput, kalahandi and Phulbani to supress human sacrifice (1851 : 1853). After a major operation by Campbell with the local Raja the human sacrifice and female infanticide was suppressed. (1980 : 57).

Suppression of Meriah is a cultural loss for Kandha and kandh-Paraja as well. So to compensate this loss they substituted buffalo for the meriah or human sacrifice and an ewe for the female infanticide. To keep their ethnic culture and religious tradition the Kandhs perform the Pod-puja (5) (literally meaning buffalo sacrifice) in

their community once in every twelve years. The buffalo brought for sacrifice is marked as Janipod (6) which means the son of Jani-kondh priest. Similarly the ewe representing the eldest daughter of the Kandh-Paraja priest is known as Toki. 'Toki' means virgin unmarried girl and mara means sacrifice. Now the Kandh-Parajas are being presented with an ewe by their traditional kings and Zamindars of respective areas and name it as Jani-toki (7) the daughter of the Priest.

How does Toki Parab takes place :

It is interesting to observe how the aura of a village comes for celebrating the festival, Toki parab. This festival falls on the preceding or the following Sunday of the Pongal or Makar Samkranti on the bright fortnight of Pausa (January). The festival continues for seven days. This festival falls in Kandh-paraja village in a peculiar manner. (1996 : p. 21-32)

During the dasahara festival; the Jani of the village puts two pegs vertically parallel to each other on the worship ground and ties a bamboo rope on it. It looks like the English capital letter 'H' standing on the ground. When the upper ends of the pegs close up to form a shape like English letter 'A' on the ground, the priest proclaims that the festival will be observed in that village. After this declaration, the village invites all the Janis and Disaries (8) (Priest and Shamans) of the Panchura (9) and Pali (10) (literally meaning; the villages sharing a common Goddess worshipped by them, usually five villages constitutes Panchura and twelve villages constitutes Barapali) and declares the festival Tokiparab to be observed as he has got the auspicious omen of joining two pegs in the worship place of Dharnikhal.

Then the Jani informs it to the Raja-king of his respective region. The Raja, as a reverence to the ritual offers an ewe to the jani. Along with it the king provides some financial assistance to the Jani for the smooth management of the festival. The ewe offered by the king is known as Toki-daughter of jani. The Toki is named as Rasmuana. Fund is collected from all the villagers to meet the expenses of the festival. As it is an agricultural festival, besides Kandha-Paraja, others also contribute funds for it. The Jani, the Disari and the two village headman of each Pali are invited to the Toki village to form a committee for the management of the festival. The invited guests from their pali are provided with lodging and fooding. These guests are the representatives of their respective village Goddesses. So they come with the "chhatra" the symbol of the Goddess, accompanied by a musician group.

Toki parab in context :

The festival is observed for seven days with pomp and ceremony. The festival begins on Wednesday; four days prior to the fatal day of the sacrifice of the Toki. The distribution of rituals over the seven days is as follows :

1. Preparation and collection of leaf and wood
2. Gurupuja
3. Tokipargha
4. Sadarpuja
5. Tokimara
6. Dhangaridola
7. Tangiulen

Day—1

On the first day, all the men and women of the Toki village go to the nearest forest for collecting leaves and fire wood. On this day collection of all necessary things meant for the festival is made in the village by the responsible members of the committee. On this day the priest worship the Dharamdebta—Sun God.

Day—2

The second day of the festival is known as Gurupuja (12). On this day the Priest and the shaman along with other people of the village go to the nearby hill. The name of the hill is Gurudongar, where the Gurubudha or Budharaja the universal tribal God is seated. It is believed that all the hills and mountains are the Gudi; the worship place of God and Goddess.

After worshipping Gurubudha they come to the seat of Dharani mata—earth mother goddess. The Jani mounts the spirit of Dharnimata and brings the axe to the village. This ritual is known as "tangi utara" literally meaning the bringing down of axe from seat of the Goddess. It is the symbol of the Goddess's spirit animated in it.

Day—3

The third day of festival is known as Tokipargha—worship ritual of Toki. On this day the Toki is bathed with turmeric water by the women of every house. A procession of Jani and other people starts in the village followed with music and dance. The toki visit from door to door to get worshipped by the villagers. The community treats the Toki as the actual daughter of the Jani. In the evening the community eats, drinks and dances with their local music and make merriment.

Day – 4

On the fourth day the Jani and Disari of all the villages assemble in the Toki village with their respective village Goddesses. They are treated as the representatives of their villages. Arrangements are made for their lodging and fooding by the Toki villagers. On this day the community cleans the road and the houses of the village.

At every entrance of the village they plant two banana trees as the sign of welcome. The sadargudi (13) is designed with the festoons of mangoleaf with folk art on the wall. The Sadardudi is in the heart of the village whereas the Dharnikhal(14) or sacrificial pit of the earth Goddess is out side the village, in the middle of a grand field. The ground near Dharnikhal is meant for festival. From Sadargudi to Dharnikhal proper decorations are made by the youth of the village. In this night the priest and the Shaman of the Toki village alongwith the Priests and Shaman of other villages unite at Sadargudi. Here, right from the mid-night the ritual begins with strict discipline. The Jani moves around the Sadargudi for four times folding his hands to Dharnimata. After it, the Jani put the alive ewe on a wooden mortar and crush it on a pestle again and again to pull out the fresh liver from its wounded body. The liver is kept in an earthern ware. It is called Mutpani. (15) It is preserved for offering near Dharnimata in Dharnikhal on the next day. Then the Jani taking an arrow in a bow shoots it aiming towards the east. This ritual is called 'Jogkand bindha'. After it a pig is sacrificed to appease all the Goddesses representing from other villages. All these rituals of the

fourth day begin at mid-night and finish before sunrise.

Day—5 : The ritual performance

Fifth day is known as Tokimara day. The Toki is offered to the earth Goddesses on this day. Villagers from all sides come to Toki village in a procession with their traditional music and warfare dance. In the procession each one has a wooden club, hand axe and big stick in his hand. They come with their symbolic village Goddess animated in a long bamboo stick designed with red clothes and peacock feathers, and also in a big "nisan" (a local drum) from every village. They come in a procession to the village. When the procession enters near the gate of the village the receptionists of the Toki village receive them in a peculiar manner. Unless the banana trees posted on the both sides of the gate are not cut down with one axe, the procession never enters into the village. It is a symbol of inviting them into the festival. Thus all the parties are invited from all sides of the village. The procession arrives on Sunday morning. On this day the whole locality irrespective of caste, age and sex come to the Toki village to attend the festival. This reception does not end up until all the parties of the invited villages arrive.

At the time of midnoon, the Jani and Disari make proper arrangements to take the 'Toki' (deadbody of the ewe) and 'Mutpani' from the Sadargudi of the village to the Dharnikhal. It is about two hundred meters away from Sadargudi. A virgin girl from their community is invited to carry up the earthen pot taking Toki's 'Mutpani'. The girl is dressed with a new red saree to take part in that ritual. She takes the mutpani from Sadargudi to Dharnikhal. The Jani holds up the Toki in a Jahpi-bamboo box on his head guarded around a military array of

young Kandh-Parajas.

While the Jani and the girl with their respective Jhapi and earthen pot start from Sadargudi, about fifty to sixty young Kandh-paraja with their sword, hand axe, wooden club and sticks encircle them to protect the Toki and Mutpani from the attack of others. They all intoxicated with liquor, are preoccupied with a sense of trance—. It is believed that if any outsider plunders away even if a single hair of the Toki by any means from their array, then all the holy action and virtues made by the Toki village will be invain. As a result of losing a hair or a piece of flesh of the Toki; they may face the loss of harvest and rain, also many unforeseen dangers in their village in forthcoming years. They also believe that if any body snatches away a flesh or a hair of the Toki from the procession and offers it to his earth goddess will be rewarded with ample harvest in forthcoming year. So while taking the Toki with mutpani from the Sadargudi to Dharnikhal the youth of the toki village try their best to save the toki from others. In spite of all these strict cautions taken by them, the out-siders manage to take the flesh or a hair plundering from the Jani's Jhapi out of the procession may it be by force by tricks. If some outsider succeeds to get the flesh or hair from the Jani, suddenly the protectors run after him with weapons to take his life. If the plunderer offers the stolen flesh to his own goddesses situated in their camp, then the attackers never do any harm to him. But if captured by them, the victim is wounded mercilessly. Instances of putting them victim to death are also heard. So in the festival the Government police from district Head quarters are deputed to watch over them.

Thus with great care and protection the 'Toki' and

'Mutpani' are brought to Dharnikhal. Here the 'Linga' is taken off out of the Dharnikhal by the Jani and put in front of the worship place. The Linga represents 'Dharam debta' and the stone simbolizes the 'Dharnimata'. Dharnikhal is the main worship place where one can see the symbolic images of God and Goddesses such as; a long bamboo stick designed with peacock feathers, a metal image of peacock on the metal pillar, a sacrificial axe, some arrows and a bow, a cluster of weapons like knife and spear etc.

In the worship place, the Jani alongwith the other priests start the ritual. Burning a lamp before the Goddess, throwing some rice on the sacrificial pit (Dharnikhal) the Jani begins the invocation (as below) which is known as Pat puja mantar. All the God and Goddesses of their habitats are invoked in this place and are appeased by offering different kinds of sacrifice to the different deities accordingly. The mantra runs as follows :

Bapude rai denda Bapude sariso Jani
Bara bhai bhimasen Kitankani
Sola bhauni Gangadi Kitaka
Nana Dekraiti gude re
Nana maninge saruti gude
Godke kata gala daniroye
Mundke lata gala
Bapude rai denda bapude sariso.

I worship twelve Bhima bhimsen.
I worship sixteen sisters Gangadei,
I worship the Goddess inside the Gudi
I worship all the Goddesses in the Gudi,

Let no thorn touch my foot

Let no creeper touch our head.

After praying all the Gods and the Goddesses of all the invited villagers the Jani takes off the mutpani from the pot. Holding it in his hands, kneeling down before the pit he recites some hymns and offers it to the earth goddess. This ritual is called Tokipara. After this, the other Goddesses of the locality are worshipped by the Jani one by one. The Jani devides the flesh of the Toki and distribute it among all the Janis of invited villages. The Janis of the respective villages consider themselves fortunate to have the auspicious toki flesh and take it with reverece. After this, the gathering disburse; the Jani and his followers remain there for further rituals.

In the evening the Jani and the Disari worship the goddess. The rest flesh and bones of the ewe is burried by 'Rapia' belonging the 'Dom'—a scheduled caste. The 'rapia' is alienated as impure and unholy for that day. Next the Jani offers a pig to the earth goddess to purify the Rapia and declares him as sacred. Then only the man is allowed to enter the house after purification.

Day—6

The Sixth day of the festival is known as Dhangridola. On this day the young unmarried Kandh-paraja boys and girls have the freedom to choose their life-partner with a socioreligious recongition in the festival ground. On this day the parents of the boys and girls have nothing to protest against their love marriage, as the whole community gives sanction to them. The youth,

on this day wearing beads around his neck is expected to pull the hand of his beloved young girl. This system is popularly known as 'Malichagha', literally means wearing of beads. It symbolizes the elopement of a girl with the boy she likes.

This is the day giving opportunity to the youth to extend love and friendship with opposite sex. The unknown boys and girls make permanent friendship ritually by addressing each other 'Baligaja' and 'Sari'. Baligaja is a type of yellow grass, by tucking it on the right ear of the other, one may be a "Sari-friend". On this day many groups of girls and boys dance and sing in the festival ground. One group sing the love song competing to defeat the other. At this time a choir of singers with their Dungdunga and Dhap (two local musical instruments) sing the song describing Gods and Goddesses, hills and mountains, rivers, villages and the deities of their locality, which reflects their love and involvement of nature and spirit.

In the afternoon, the young girls of this community make a lovely arrangement of receiving the guests to appease them. They invite the guests to whom they choose to be their own friend or sari. The group of girls holding the hands of the guest, take him to the place of worship. They sit the guest on a cot; carrying the cot on their shoulders on four sides they move around the worship place seven times. At the time all the girls sing the song to entertain the guests. After moving around, they keep the cot in front of the Goddess and touch the feet of the guest one by one and make 'Juhar' (obeisance). This ritual is called Dhangridola. Literally meaning a swinging of the young girls. They also collect some tips; money as a regard from the guests. The singing and dancing goes

on till evening. Thus, the ritual of the sixth day ends.

Day – 7

In the seventh day the Jani along with the newly married couple of the previous day, leads a huge procession to the Gurudongar, the seat of Gurubudha. There they beg the blessings from Gurubudha. After coming from Gurudongar, they eat, drink and make merry by singing and dancing. At night the Jani returns the sacrificial axe to the earth goddess. After it the Jani ends the festival. The next day the associates of the Toki village bring down the festoons of mango leaves. Thus the grand festival ends after the observation of seven days.

Myths on Toki Parab :

There is a myth found among this community as to why the Tokiparab is observed. The myth corresponds to the problem of bride-price and free marriage system among the Kandh-paraja tribe. The myth is as follows :

"In a kandh-paraja village the Jani had a daughter named Rasamauna. After maturity her father proposed to give her in marriage with a lad of the village name Mundradharia. The negotiation was also over. Marriage date was fixed up. A few days remained for the marriage ceremony. Meanwhile Rasmuana fell in love with Baplamada, another youngman of the same village. As to keep his beloved daughter's interest, the Jani cancelled the previous negotiation made with Mundradharia and gave his daughter in marriage with Baplamada. Time passed on.

One day Rasmuana went to the nearby forest to collect fire-wood. There she saw Mundradharia – the groom proposed for her. She, out of passion fell in love with him

in the forest and this game of love went on. Baplamada, her actual husband new this and he went to the jani—his father-in-law and told every thing. He also claimed the Jani that he would divorce his wife for her infidelity. So he demanded the Hajra(18) bride price which he had paid to his father-in-law during his marriage. He also suggested the Jani to hand over his daughter to Mundradharia according to her will.

So the Jani had to return the Harja—bride price taken from Bapalamada. Also he had to pay 'Mandpani' (19) fine fixed by his community for the divorce and the remarriage of his daughter. Again Jani fixed up a date for his daughter's marriage in the month of pousa. At that time the Kandh-paraja were to observe the festival of mariah. The community reported the Jani that no victim was found out for the sacrifice and asked him to arrange the sacrifice of his own for the festival. The festival arrived. No victim was found. The Jani suddenly sacrificed his own daughter Rasamuana before the Goddess. Thus it became a tradition that the Jani would give his own daughter for the sacrifice. Now the female infanticide has stopped, by instead of it an ewe is symbolically presented to the earth goddess as a substitution.

When we analyse the above myth is would be revealed that marriage with social recognition is accepted where as violation of social rules results fine and punishment by the community. Illicit love violating the social norms causes hatred and results in the punishment like elimination of the defaulter.

In Kandh-paraja community, Jani, the religious head has a lot of socio-religious responsibilities. Their religious belief is that the pure character and action of

the Jani could save their community from the unseen dangers. The Gods and Goddesses are appeased according to the manner of worship and action of the Jani. He propitiates them by means of his own virtue and spiritual power. He is the mediator of man and spirit. So if the purity in his personality is deviated or some social norms are violated by him, it is believed that the Jani would not be able to appease the earth Goddess, or if he does so, the result would be harmful for the whole community. So in the myth, the Jani sacrificed his own daughter, to prove himself pure and to escape from such socio-economic and psychological burden. It is a fact that, the hatred of Jani for his daughter, at the same time the need for a victim for sacrifice both the causes have doubled the problem in his mind. Individually in order to maintain his priesthood status ; also as a community leader to manage the welfare of his society by propitiating the earth Goddess with a sacrifice, the Jani tried to kill two birds in one arrow by offering his own daughter to the earth goddess in the festival.

By doing this the Jani mentally compensated the loss of his daughter by receiving a sanction from the community on him. He has not considered it a sin as he has got rid of two problems burying it under a religious mask. The plea by the Jani in his invocation depicts that Goddess Herself choose the victim for her sacrifice. The donor of the sacrifice bears on sin' for his act. This theme has been picturized in the following invocations recited by the Jani during 'meriah' sacrifice.

1. *Nanu Kode aie papu hille e'.*
   Siri-kamresi Kepitee Loh-kdali,
   Tinjim Jane Durga,

Nanu kode aie, Nange papu hille ye.

(We bear no sin.

the Iron-weapon is taking the sacrifice

Durga is taking the sacrifice,

For it, we bear no sin.)

2. *Ita kanda tinjim jani*
Meria kanda Tinjim jane.
(The sword is taking sacrifice
the weapon is eating the meria)

3. *Purti susta padi, Raji susta padi*
Jada hillretu, manda hillaretu
Abare manbe, Balare manbe.
(Let the earth be healthy,
and let the country,
be no danger.)

According to the Kondhs the earth mother and Sun god are the universal mother and father-prakriti and Purusha or "Dharnimata" and "Dharamdebta". The living being, plants and animals, animate and inanimate are the offshoot of these two forces. As man and animal live on exploiting nature and plants, in turn the plants also exploit the man and animal absorbing it in the earth. In Vedic and Puranic literature this philosophy clearly speaks that "all dead things rotting corpse or sticking garbage when returned to the earth are transformed into things of beauties such as fruits and flowers and wholesome things that nourish life. Such is the alchemy of Mother Earth". (1986 : p-29 : Rajagopalachary). It is a reciprocal process in which both the animal and plant live on dedicating each other through a natural law,

exercised by the supernatural power. Thus this vedic philosophy and world view of thousand years ago has attracted the mind of this land. No doubt this heinous action of human sacrifice adopted by them in the ritual are inhuman, but the worldview of "Sarve Bhabantu Sukhina" – let all the happy in their invocation has shown their greatness of self dedication for the well being of community.

Tokimara – the symbolic representation of 'Kumaribali' or sacrifice of virgin girl is symbol of fertility and productivity. The earth mother Goddess Herself is the symbol of fertility. Meriah is substituted with buffalo sacrifice and Tokimara, with an ewe represents symbolically which compensates the cultural loss of stopping female infanticide. Virginity is the symbol of fertility and creativity. The ewe is regarded as the daughter of Jani. The process of worship and the tradition of ritual is obeyed with strict discipline. The 'mutpani' which symbolizes fertility means the 'urine water' of the ewe. It is the symbol of female procreative power incorporated in the Toki. Alongwith the liver of the ewe, the rice, husk and water is added in the earhten pot and all those constitute mutpani which bears the meaning of getting life, corns and ample rain respectively. Thus it represents the possibilities of getting new life and food resources on the earth. Moreover the mutpani taken to the Dharnikhal from Sadargudi by a virgin Kandh-paraja girl of ten to twelve, signifies the name and the tradition of the festival.

The phallic stone, iron weapons, Nisana musical drum, phallic wooden stumps, bamboo sticks with peacock feathers are the symbolic Gods and Goddesses of the community. The sacrificial pit of earth Goddess is

the symbol of female procreative organ. The peacock model represents the totemic symbol of Kondh tribes. (1968 : 120-121).

The original spirit of the Goddess is based in some hill, outside the village. This place is said to be the origin place of the Goddess. The discoverer of the Goddess finds her by getting some omen, sign and dream . So, during some worship or festival the spirit is invited through a ritual e.g. in this festival the ritual of Tangi utara is followed by this process.

In the Dharnikhal the sacrifice is offered to earth Goddess and a stone is covered to protect it. Comparing the greater earth as a great sacrifice pit and the animal and nature inside the earth covered by the sky like the stone—the Jani recites the invocation the meaning of which bears the naturalistic worldview. The meaning of the invocation are as follows :

O mother, as inside the earth pit
covered by a big stone—
The offering is secured,
This Earth is a great pit,
This sky, the cover and
we nature and creatures are inside
O mother, save us like-wise.

Social Significance :

The religious rites are meant to solve the problem of the community. (1980 : 344) This may be examined from the present festival studied, the sixth day of Tokiparab, known as dhangridola the love marriage of boys and girls with socio-reiligous recongnitions and

sanctions and to solves the problem of bride price. The social problem of 'Harja'—bride price among the Kandh and the other communities of Kalahandi is still prevailing in the society (1978 :5). The bridegroom pays bride price as demanded by the bride's father. Even if a groom is unable to pay the bride price and want to marry a girl, the father of the girl may agree to adopt the boy as 'bride service' for a fixed period of time to compensate the amount of bride. After the amount is collected from 'bride service' the couple set free. But in some places where the bride's father refuses to accept the proposal of the boy, the marriage between the interested boys and girls fails. This failure is only due to the poor economic condition of the boy.

This ritual, thus, helps the loving couple getting married, who were unable to marry due to lack of providing bride price. This ritual is known as Dhangrighicha.

Moreover, the guests and participants honoured by the young Kandh-paraja girls in the ritual of Dhangridola, irrespective of caste and creed shows the oneness in tribal culture shared by the non-tribals. The Raja, the Bramhins, the village headmen and the other gentlemen are invited for this ritual. Thus, the entertaining of the guest in this festival shows the mutual sharing of culture among the tribals and non-tribals.

As this is a festival to pay reverence to the earth Goddess, also to assure more harvest in future, all the peasants of the society, irrespective of caste and creed take part in it. The non-tribals also believe the philosophy of Kondh-Paraja and want to bury some flesh

of the Toki in their field to get ample harvest. So the influence of the tribal culture among the non-tribals of this locality is represented in this festival.

In this world man exploit the men exploiting the nature. But the indigenous people of this land bear the naturalistic world view. They have their way of thinking, which has been symbolically represented in their rites and rituals. The equality of man and nature keeping the balance of the earth basing on reciprocal dependence is the sole philosophy of the people of this locality. Here no difference is seen in between the animal and nature as both are the creature of a supernatural power Dharnimata—the earth mother Goddess.



NOTES :

1. "Toki" means a virgin girl and Parab means festival, also known as Tokimara parab. Literally meaning of Tokimara is sacrifice of a virgin girl. Mara means sacrifice.

2. As regard to the social status, the Kondh-Paraja tribes are inferior to the Kondh tribe. They observe Tokimara which is the counterpart of meriah. Meriah was observed by the Kandh tribe of south east India in 19th century. The Kandh never performs Tokimara.

3. & 4. In the past, the 'Dom' and the 'Ghasias' were considered untouchables. Now they are belong to Scheduled Caste. In this festival they help the Kondh-Paraja tribe. The 'Doms' are supposed

to be the ministers of Kondh. A proverb as regards to it is 'Kandhghar-Dam Jalngia' means a Kandh master is followed by a Dom mediator or servant. Another proverb runs, Kondh Raja Dom Mantri – Kondh is king and Dom is minster.

5. & 6. 'Pod' means Buffalo and 'puja' means sacrifice. Previously the Kandhs were offering their 'Po' son to the earth Goddess. When the human sacrifice stopped they sacrificed Pod – buffalo in place of 'Po' – son. Here, the phonic resemblance of 'Po' and 'Pod' may be observed. The Kandh have appeased the Goddess by offering 'Pod' instead of 'Po'.

7. Imitating the ritual of Kondhs the Kandh-Paraja used to sacrifice Toki – virgin girl. The Jani was offering his own daughter to the Goddess. After the suppression of female infanticide, an ewe is being offering to the earth Goddess. The ewe is identified with the Jani Toki – the daughter of the priest.

8. In Kandh community the priest is known as Jani and the shaman whom the Goddess spirit possesses is Disari. In Gond community the priest is called Jhankar and the Shaman is Dihari. Here one can mark that the Gondi 'h' becomes 's' in Kandhi e.g. Dihari to Disari.

9. Five villages constitute Panchura. The social organisation system in ancient India was based on this 'Panch' literally consisting five villages. The demonstration consists of five villages sharing worship of the clan Goddess, commonly found even now-a-days.

10. Palli means village. Bara means twelve. Barapalli means twelve villages where the clan is divided into those villages sharing their clan Goddess. The twelve villages unite in the main village from where they have divided. It is the ideal model of central Indian political and social organisation.

11. Sungod is known as Dharamdevta or Dharam Niranjan, Father of Universe.

12. Master, teacher, ancestor spirit and first progenitor are known as Guru. In central India, the Gond culture Hero Budhadeo is known as Gurubudha : Usually the Guru or Rishi stay in the forest. Thus the seat of Gurubudha is situated in the hill known as Gurudongar. People go to Gurudongar for blessings.

13. The spirit invited from the origin place of the God or Goddess is brought to the village. The Kandhs establish the Goddess in the heart of the village and build a house; known as sadargudi.

14. The sacrificial pit away from the village is situated in the festival ground. The meriah victim was being given to earth goddess here.

15. Literally mutpani means urine water. The level of the ewe with some water, husk and rice constitute mutpani which symbolizes the life, harvest and rain.

16. Barabhai Bhima Bhimsen, literally meaning twelve brother Bhima is worshipped as the Gods of the Rain and cultivation in central India and South India.

17. Sohala bhauni Gangadevi : People believe that there are sixteen rivers in this land led by river Ganga, the holy Goddess. All the rivers are regarded as Goddesses and mountains as Gods.

18. 'Harja' means bride price. The bride's father demands Harja from the groom. The Harja— may be some money or in form of materials demanded by the father of the bride.

19. Mandpani—means liquor. A person alleged unsocial or criminal is punished with some fines for his exemption from the crime. The amount collected from the person is spent in feasting and drinking liquor, so this fine is known as Mandpani consumed by the community.

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